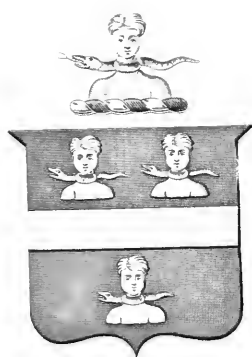


HOMERS AND HAGNERS

OF

JOHN FURSKIN

ET AL.



L. L. Price.











HOMES AND HAUNTS OF  
JOHN RUSKIN







BRANTWOOD





# HOMES AND HAUNTS OF JOHN RUSKIN

BY  
E. T. COOK

WITH TWENTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR FROM ORIGINAL  
DRAWINGS, AND SIXTEEN IN BLACK AND WHITE

BY  
E. M. B. WARREN

LONDON  
GEORGE ALLEN & COMPANY, LTD.  
44 & 45 RATHBONE PLACE

1912

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Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.  
At the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh

## PREFACE

MISS EMILY WARREN, the author of the drawings in this book, had, when a very young girl, written to Ruskin for advice. He never refused either advice or help to anyone who was sincere in seeking it, and seemed likely to profit by it. He saw promise in Miss Warren's drawings; he gave her lessons, encouragement, commissions. After his death, she conceived the idea of making an artistic pilgrimage in Ruskin's footsteps to the places where he lived or which he loved. She carried out her plan as opportunity offered during several years, and has drawn for exhibition a large collection of views of Ruskin's Homes and Haunts. A selection of these views was made for reproduction, and I was asked by the publishers to supply some letterpress, illustrative of the drawings. This task I undertook, upon the completion of more arduous labours in connexion with Ruskin's life and work.

To admirers of Ruskin Miss Warren's thought will seem as happy as it is pious. We visit the place where a great man was born or where he died; but, as a French writer upon Ruskin has asked,<sup>1</sup> does not a great man inhabit even more the places which he admired, and why should we not make pilgrimage to them also?

“More sweet than odours caught by him who sails  
Near spicy shores of Araby the blest,  
A thousand times more exquisitely sweet,  
The freight of holy feeling which we meet,  
In thoughtful moments, wafted by the gales  
From fields where good men walk, or bowers wherein they rest.”

---

<sup>1</sup> M. Marcel Proust in his Introduction to the French translation of *The Bible of Amiens*.

# HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

So Wordsworth says ; and it is well that the homes and burial-places of great men should attract their pilgrims. But the homes of great men are often very like those of other men, and their tombs contain only what is no longer their very selves. One may better seek their soul, one may learn more of their spirit, by visiting the scenes which they loved, which inspired their work, and upon which they in their turn have impressed something of their personality. Even to the not very devout admirer, such pilgrimages may have an interest. Travels without an object are often tedious or disappointing. There are many objects and interests which can give point and zest to travel. To follow in the footsteps of some favourite author or painter is one of them, and this book may perhaps give pleasure in that sort to some who know Ruskin's writings.

The scope of my letterpress is fixed by the title and origin of the book, as explained above, by limitations of space, and by the fact that I have already written at large elsewhere upon Ruskin's Life and Work. The present book is confined to a study of his "Homes and Haunts" ; and as the space was limited, no attempt has been made to be exhaustive and to mention, or describe, every scene with which Ruskin was familiar. The book touches only his principal and favourite "haunts." I have been desirous, too, of avoiding repetition from my "Life of Ruskin," and have not attempted, in describing his homes and haunts, to follow rigidly a biographical order. The material is arranged around particular places, regardless of the chronological order of his travels. The chapters will be found, however, to conform, more or less, to a logical order, corresponding with successive phases of Ruskin's work. We visit first (chaps. i-iv) the places where Ruskin spent his youth and which influenced his early taste. Then we take "the road to the Alps" with him (chap. v), and visit Switzerland

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(chap. vi)—where much of the material for *Modern Painters* was collected. Next come France (chap. vii) and *The Seven Lamps*, and *The Stones of Venice* (chap. viii). The two next chapters—dealing with Chamonix (ix) and Mornex (x)—may be taken as covering in some sort Ruskin's economic work ; for at Chamonix, he wrote *Unto this Last* and at Mornex, *Munera Pulveris*. The chapter on Oxford (xi) ought, it may be supposed, to have been placed earlier ; but, as I explain in it, Oxford made little impression upon Ruskin in his undergraduate days, and his true association with the University belongs to the later times of *The Oxford Museum* and of his Professorship. "Italy" (chap. xii) might reasonably have been placed earlier ; but apart from Venice, Ruskin's later Italian travels were the more fruitful, and it was more convenient to place the chapter where it is. Last of all, of course, comes Brantwood (chap. xiii). The study of Ruskin's homes and haunts, thus summarised, may be found, I hope, to throw some side-lights, neither uninteresting nor wholly unimportant, upon his life and work.

The French writer, already quoted, says truly enough that the indications which authors give us in their books about favourite places are "sometimes so vague that pilgrimages in their footsteps have a risk of being uncertain, hesitating, illusory." Ruskin was himself freely communicative and precise ; and his comings and goings have been collated by editors of almost meticulous industry. His haunts, his preferences, his aversions ; his method of travel and habits when on the road ; his homes, his lodgings, his inns : all, or nearly all, are known ; and as I read through what I had written upon these matters in the following chapters, a few general observations occurred to me which may be worth setting down here.

Ruskin's "travel-years" began early and lasted long. Every

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reader who even glances through the pages of this book will be struck by the large portion of Ruskin's time which was spent in foreign travel and study. He was under no necessity of earning his daily bread either in business or by a profession. I was told the other day, what I had not heard when I wrote his "Life," that for a time he did mount a stool in his father's counting-house. It must, I think, have been for a very short time. At any rate, he tells us that he had refused to enter his father's business; and that on the question arising, when he had taken his degree at Oxford, what he was to do next, he proposed as a solution "Go again to Chamonix." Where accordingly he and his parents went forthwith. The incident is typical. Ruskin was able throughout his working life to go where he liked and when he liked. He came in the end to make large profits out of his books; and when he had dispersed his inherited fortune in lavish giving, his literary earnings were the greater portion of his income. But at the time when they were written, and for very many years afterwards, his principal works must have cost vastly more to produce—in preparatory travel and in illustration—than the author's profits from the sales. They were works only possible to a rich man. What direction his talents would have taken if he had been less favoured with this world's goods, it were idle to speculate. His native genius was such as must have found expression, no matter what his external circumstances had been. But for the actual form which it found, we have to thank the honest wine-merchant who used his purse to indulge his son.

In these days of wide travel, Ruskin's tours may seem narrow and restricted. His method of study, as I have said below (p. 192), was "intensive." This was the secret of much of his strength—in giving acuteness of penetration, fervour of sympathy, and so forth; but perhaps also, the secret of some weakness—as in

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encouraging partiality of judgment, and limitation of outlook. Just as he made no pretence or attempt to be acquainted with all the works of every artist whom he criticised, so he did not range over the whole world in search of the picturesque in nature or of the noble in architecture. He did not travel widely ; but he knew a few places extremely well. My chapters, as I have said, are not exhaustive, and it must not be assumed, because a place is not named, that Ruskin was never there. But it may be well to mention one or two restrictions in the scope of his haunts. He was never out of Europe. He never visited Spain or Greece. And he knew the Netherlands hardly at all. He somewhere cites with approval the maxim, " Love what you study ; study what you love." A sound maxim, so far as it goes, assuredly ; but how are you to be certain what it is that you love ? Is not the study sometimes the door to the love ? Though Ruskin found much that was penetrating, sympathetic, and suggestive to say about the arts of Greece, he yet did not love them (so he confesses) " as others have." He was once, and comparatively early in life, near to going to Greece. His friend, Charles Newton, pressed him to come. But he went not. He was sealed, he seems to suggest, as a Goth, as irrevocably as Newton was as a Greek. But one wonders whether a visit to Greece would have weakened the seal. Perhaps not. It was not for want of first-hand knowledge of the great monuments of the classical revival that Ruskin abused them.

A similar line of reflection is suggested by the absence of the Low Countries from the list of Ruskin's haunts. If chance, or the inclination of his parents, had led him often in the impressionable years of youth to the Dutchmen's country, might he not have had a more sympathetic eye for the Dutchmen's art ? Again, perhaps not. Perhaps we are all born highlanders or lowlanders in our tastes ; but this is a question on which I have touched in my

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first chapter, and I turn here to a different aspect of Ruskin's travels.

This book is an account of Ruskin's "homes" and "haunts." But his homes, as the reader will discover, were very often "homes from home." The phrase is familiar in the advertisement of "select boarding-houses," and it is of foreign inns that Ruskin often speaks as his "homes." Until he was over fifty years of age he hardly had any home of his own at home. A large part of his life was spent in inns or lodgings. Dr. Johnson would have counted Ruskin fortunate therein. "'There is no private house,' said Johnson, 'in which people can enjoy themselves so well, as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that everybody should be easy, in the nature of things it cannot be; there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him; and no man, but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man's house as if it were his own. Whereas at a tavern there is a general freedom from anxiety. . . . No, sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.' He then repeated, with great emotion, Shenstone's lines :—

‘ Whoe’er has travell’d life’s dull round,  
Where’er his stages may have been,  
May sigh to think he still has found  
The warmest welcome at an inn.’ ”

With Johnson, to whom "a tavern chair was the throne of human felicity," a principal charm of an inn was "free conversation and an interchange of discourse." To Ruskin the attraction of the inns, which he best liked, was seclusion. With the landlords and land-



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ladies and their families, he made friends ; but, for the rest, his “inn-homes” were places where he could draw quietly at the window, and write undisturbed at a deal table in his bed-room. Ruskin had none of the fads which make some authors dependent upon their own study-tables or favourite desks. Of course he often made preliminary research and sometimes he revised his work at home. But a large part of his literary work was done in foreign inns, away from books or libraries of reference. Perhaps this is an explanation of some inaccuracies. At any rate, the fact is worth recording that, as may be gathered incidentally from the account of his haunts in this book, much of Ruskin’s writing was done on the road.

I have a good deal to say, here and there in the ensuing pages, about foreign hostelries. I have explained the reason ; and perhaps I need not offer any apology ; for indeed it is only a traveller, blessed with an unusual superfineness of spirit or cursed with an unnecessary hardihood of cant, who will deny that good inns play a very important part in the pleasures of travel. Many of the inns of which Ruskin speaks affectionately are things of the past. So also have many of his favourite scenes been “restored,” destroyed, or vulgarised. But this is not so largely the case, I think, as some of his pages of vituperation might suggest. To some readers, perhaps, these chapters may recall travels, preferences, pleasures of their own. I must hope that they will not be unpleasantly affected by discovering, if they knew it not already, that Ruskin was before them :—

“ In the heart’s album there are treasured faces,  
Our household darlings, friends which are our own ;  
And with them favourite haunts and cherished places  
So dear, they seem but made for us alone.”

I should be well content if I could feel sure that the pages in

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this volume would give to the reader some portion of the pleasure which they have given me in writing: pleasure in reviving memories of favourite haunts and of beautiful places ; of friendly inns, of holiday-travels, of fruitful hours spent with chosen books and congenial friends. With such thoughts, I dedicate my portion of this volume to the dear memory of E. C. C., the partner of many travels in happy years ; and to G. F. H., in gratitude for kind companionship and help, given in many ways and not least in the preparation of the present book.

E. T. C.

*August 1912.*

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# HOMES AND HAUNTS OF JOHN RUSKIN

## CHAPTER I

### LONDON

"I have never found the memories of my childhood beguile me into any undue admiration of the architecture in Billiter Street or Brunswick Square."—RUSKIN.

WHICH is the more potent force in moulding a man's tastes and interests—the force of contrast and revolt, or that of early association? The question is perhaps not scientific. In these days, as I am aware, we are told to take little stock of environment, and to concentrate our attention upon germ-plasm and gametes; but these are only terms, and bring us no nearer to the mystery of life. The world is likely, therefore, to consider and discuss for some time longer the old questions concerning influences which may, at least potentially, be considered palpable.

John Ruskin, who loved green fields and blue hills, first looked out upon the world with no brighter prospect than of brick walls and a water-cart. He became the friend of the Aiguilles and his heart went out in passionate sympathy to the snowy Alps; but during the greater part of his early life he had in the field of constant vision no eminence more tremendous than that of the Norwood Hills. He says somewhere that painters, and especially landscape-painters, should live in the country; but the records disclose no necessity that they should be born there. Titian, it is true,

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breathed "empyreal air"; but Turner, none purer than blew in Maiden Lane. And it is interesting to note, if one turns over a Handbook to the National Gallery, how many of our English painters who excelled either in landscape or in romantic other-worldliness were natives of London or of some other large town. Blake, for instance, was born in Golden Square; Burne-Jones and David Cox were born in Birmingham; Linnell and Rossetti in Bloomsbury; Harding was born in Deptford, Hook in Clerkenwell, William Hunt in Long Acre, and Frederick Walker in Marylebone. Ruskin in one of his famous chapters contrasts "The Two Boyhoods," picturing first the "free winds and fiery clouds" of "Giorgione's school and Titian's home," and then the close-set block of houses and market-litter of Maiden Lane. Turner, he tells us, never wholly outgrew an attachment to anything that bore an image of the place of his birth. And that may be; yet the facts remain that the greatest English painter of landscape passed his early years in a sordid by-street, and that it was not the latent possibilities of London that most attracted his artistic genius. Turner did, indeed, find some pictorial fantasies upon London effects; but Yorkshire, Venice, and the lakes and mountains of Switzerland the more, and the most often, excited his imagination. Not likeness to his early surroundings, but contrast, governed his choice.

The case was much the same with Ruskin himself. Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, where he was born and lived for four years, was not in his time, I suppose, sordid, but it was certainly not rural. The child found much, he tells us, to interest him, but I am not aware that in later years he saw anything to love in scenes that reminded him of Hunter Street; unless indeed it be that the filling of the water-carts, above mentioned and wholly admirable in his eyes, was responsible for his subsequent interest

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in irrigation. As for the Stones of London, see what he says in the passage quoted at the head of this chapter. He was, he tells us, a mountain-lover from childhood. In modern days, since Rousseau set the fashion, who are the best mountain-lovers—men born in highlands or in lowlands? men who live among the mountains, or those who seek them out for contrast and relaxation? Mountain-bred peasants generally love best the flats. Every English traveller in Switzerland or Italy must have had talk with peasants who say: “Yours is a lovely country, I am told—all flat.” Only the other day, upon the journey from Dover to London, I was in a railway carriage with some Italians of the educated class. “What a beautiful landscape!” they exclaimed to each other as the train carried us through the fields of Kent; “what a garden! what verdure! what smoothness!” On the other hand, the Swiss assuredly do love their mountains. In analysing the subject, one must disentangle utilitarian, from sentimental, motives. “Mountaineers love the flats,” so I have seen the case argued; “lowlanders do not love the mountains.” No: but is not the explanation in each case that the outlook is purely utilitarian? I remember driving once in the diligence to Chamonix with a Savoyard who had emigrated as a young man to America, and having made his modest competence was now returning to his native valley. “I love these mountains,” said he, “and I loved them when I was a boy, but then I hardly dared to speak of them.” I asked him, why? thinking that I was talking perhaps to a mute, inglorious Wordsworth who had been haunted with delicious dread by mountain-beauty. But his explanation was more prosaic. “The mountains! my father used to say to me with scorn. The mountains! They give us no food!” So, then, perhaps we must here fall back after all upon the gametes which I began by dismissing. Some men, so far as merely utilitarian

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

considerations do not affect their preferences, may be born with a love of mountains, others may not. Ruskin, one need not doubt, would have loved the blue hills as well, if he had been born among them ; yet I think that he loved them all the better by force of contrast with his earliest surroundings.

A street leading out of Brunswick Square was, as aforesaid, Ruskin's birthplace (Plate I). The house (No. 54 Hunter Street) remains unaltered since his time, and a memorial disc has been set upon it by the County Council. There is nothing else to distinguish it from thousands of other dull houses in hundreds of other dingy streets. It is interesting to note the place as one passes it by chance walking, or in a cab-drive to one of the northern stations ; but as a place of pilgrimage the house can only be recommended to the very devout. "What I refuse to see," wrote Sydney Smith from Rouen, "is where particular things were done to particular persons ;—the square where Joan of Arc was burnt,—the house where Corneille was born. The events I admit to be important ; but from long experience, I have found that the square where Joan of Arc was burnt, and the room where Corneille was born, have such a wonderful resemblance to other rooms and squares, that I have ceased to interest myself about them." The house in Billiter Street (No. 7), which was the office of "Ruskin, Telford, and Domecq," the wine-merchants, we cannot go to see, even if we would, for the street has been rebuilt. Ruskin described the place in *Præterita* with all the minuteness of humorous memory characteristic of that delightful book ; but there is nothing in the passage to suggest that the City awoke any responsive echo in the boy's imagination. Some of my readers, I imagine, will share with me a fond memory of the first visit to a father's office in the City, and of the mingled awe, mystery, and excitement which the crowded streets and bustling business aroused. But the



RUSKIN'S BIRTHPLACE



## LONDON

heart of the young Ruskin was fixed, even from his earliest years, upon his blue hills. To Ruskin London was not, as Lowell pictures it, "the palace which David built for Bathsheba, sitting in hearing of one hundred streams," but rather the London of Shelley—"a city very like Hell." The blue-grey mist of London, again, which many writers have celebrated and artists have pictured, made no appeal to Ruskin, though he had a poor relation, whom he sometimes visited, living in Chelsea in one of the old houses near Battersea Bridge. His attack upon Whistler's Nocturnes may or may not be justified on other grounds, but the unmeasured terms in which it was delivered suggest that he may have had no eye for that sense of beauty which the good Londoner feels "when the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanili, and the warehouses are palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairyland is before us." Ruskin, if he had been susceptible to the charm of London, might have written Whistler's passage; but the cities which he loved were those whose quaint gables looked down on quiet market-places or of which the marble towers rose up into clear sky. The scenery and the architecture which appealed to this London-bred child, from his earliest years and throughout his life, appealed to him in contrast and escape.

This is a point of view which Ruskin himself presents here and there in his books. He tells us, in one place, that he was taken as a boy to the annual Water-Colour Exhibitions, and that he used to get hold of a catalogue beforehand, marking all the Robsons, because they were sure to be of purple mountains, and all the Copley Fieldings which he knew would be of lakes or sea.<sup>1</sup> And "what a simple company of connoisseurs we were," he says

<sup>1</sup> See *The Eagles' Nest*, § 41.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

elsewhere, " who crowded into happy meeting, on the first Mondays in Mays of long ago, in the bright large room of the Old Water-Colour Society, and discussed, with holiday gaiety, the unimposing merits of the favourites, from whose pencils we knew precisely what to expect. It became by common and tacit consent Mr. Prout's privilege to introduce foreign elements of romance and amazement. In contrast with Midland locks and barges, his ' On the Grand Canal, Venice ' was an Arabian enchantment ; among the mildly elegiac country of Llangollen or Stoke Pogis, his ' Sepulchral Monuments at Verona ' were Shakespearian tragedy ; and to us who had just come into the room out of Finsbury or Mincing Lane, his ' Street in Nuremberg ' was a German fairy tale." <sup>1</sup> Again it will be seen, the attraction was one of contrast.

Ruskin's later London homes, if more fashionable, were not more congenial in immediate surroundings, than Hunter Street. After his marriage in 1848, he took No. 31 Park Street, Grosvenor Square, and it remained in his occupation till the end of the summer of 1851. He was much abroad during that period, but it was in Park Street that he wrote, besides minor pieces, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and the first volume of *The Stones of Venice*. Park Street has in large measure been rebuilt during recent years, and No. 31 has ceased to exist. In Ruskin's time the street was of small, dull houses such as still remain here and there in it, and opposite to No. 31 was a space of blank wall. For the season of 1853, Ruskin again took a London house, this time in Charles Street (No. 6), Grosvenor Square, and it was during that period that the third volume of *The Stones of Venice* was written.<sup>2</sup> It adds something to one's understanding of the *Lamps* and the

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on Prout and Hunt in Ruskin on Pictures*, vol. ii. p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> The second volume was written at Herne Hill ; see the next chapter, p. 14.



## LONDON

*Stones* to know that many of their glowing passages of description and burning passages of denunciation were written in a dull London street. "Let the reader," writes Ruskin in the *Stones*, "forming for himself as vivid and real conception as he is able, either of a group of Venetian palaces in the fourteenth century, or if he likes better, of one of the more fantastic but even richer streets of Rouen, Antwerp, Cologne, or Nuremberg, and keeping this gorgeous image before him—go out into any thoroughfare representative, in a general and characteristic way, of the feeling for domestic architecture in modern times: let him, for instance, if in London, walk once up and down Harley Street, or Baker Street, or Gower Street; and then, looking upon this picture and on this, set himself to consider (for this is to be the subject of our following and final inquiry) what have been the causes which have induced so vast a change in the European mind." In tracing the stages through which Renaissance architecture conducted the constructive faculties of men "from the Grand Canal to Gower Street," "from the marble shaft, and the lancet arch, and the wreathed leafage, and the glowing and melting harmony of gold and azure, to the square cavity in the brick wall," Ruskin was writing with memories of Bloomsbury and with present aspect of the long, unlovely streets of the West End.

Contrast had its force upon Ruskin in the economic as well as in the æsthetic sphere, and there are experiments of his as a social reformer—some of them trifling enough, but one of them of enduring value—which have local association with London. He was a sworn foe of dirt. "The speedy abolition of all abolishable filth," he said, "is the first process of education"; and by way of practising what he preached, he set himself to the task of abolishing a piece of London mud. He was a constant visitor to the British Museum; his walks thither, as also to the Working

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

Men's College (then in Red Lion Square), took him through Seven Dials and St. Giles's. He was, moreover, much interested in the relief of distress caused by unemployment ; and like some others who have studied the question, thought that street-cleaning was a form of work suitable to the case. He resolved, therefore, to take in hand the pavements in and around Church Lane, St. Giles's. The local authorities raised no objection, and a small company of the otherwise unemployed was set to work. His friends occasionally made an expedition to see the Ruskin crossing-sweepers in St. Giles's, as afterwards to see the Ruskin diggers at Oxford ; and I believe that sometimes he took a hand with the broom himself, as later with the pick-axe at Hinksey. His ideal of clean pavement in the centre of London failed, however, to realise itself ; the contributions of transitional mud were, as he explained, too constant, and the inhabitants were too passive. The walk to the Museum through St. Giles's is still perhaps haunted by Ruskin's spectre, "sweeping, vehemently sweeping." <sup>1</sup>

Ruskin's inquiries among his squad of crossing-sweepers and other researches into the way in which the poor live led him to start another experiment. Everyone who has studied these matters knows, what Chancellors of the Exchequer have often explained in connexion with alterations in the tea-duty, that the poor in buying commodities in small quantities have as a rule to pay more in proportion than customers who are able to buy in larger quantities. There is in a certain measure a legitimate reason for this : to sell a pound at one time means one bag and one transaction ; to sell it in ounces means sixteen. But it may be doubted whether this is the only factor in the case, and whether most retail-dealers do not make a profit on the subdivision. At any rate it was Ruskin's conviction that they did, and that the

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth's *Dion*.

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poor suffered thereby. So by way of setting an example in "honest dealing" he set up a tea-shop of his own, and established two of his mother's old servants therein as saleswomen. In the pages of *Fors Clavigera* account is given of the trouble taken in painting the sign, "Mr. Ruskin's Tea-Shop," and of the fortunes of the establishment. It did not long survive; for Ruskin found that "the poor only like to buy their tea where it is brilliantly lighted and eloquently ticketed," and he refused to compete with his neighbouring tradesmen "either in gas or rhetoric." Neither the sign painted by Mr. Arthur Severn nor the set of old china with which Ruskin dressed his shop-window compensated for the refusal of those allurements. The house still stands, and still among other goods sells tea. It is No. 29 Paddington Street (in Marylebone, three minutes' walk from Baker Street Station). As if to endorse the truth of Ruskin's account of his failure, a device of gas above the shop-front proclaims "TEA" to the passer-by.

Not far from the tea-shop is the site of a larger and more enduring experiment in social reform with which Ruskin is associated. He had long mused over the misery of London, and the fire burns in many a page of his earlier, as of his later, books—in a passage of *Sesame*, for instance, printed in blood-red ink to arrest the reader's eye. Less well known is the passage in an early pamphlet in which he seeks to lift the veil:—

"It is one of the strange characters of the human mind, necessary indeed to its peace, but infinitely destructive of its power, that we never thoroughly feel the evils which are not actually set before our eyes. If, suddenly, in the midst of the enjoyments of the palate and lightnesses of heart of a London dinner-party, the walls of the chamber were parted, and through their gap, the nearest human beings who were famishing, and in

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

misery, were borne into the midst of the company—feasting and fancy-free—if, pale with sickness, horrible in destitution, broken by despair, body by body, they were laid upon the soft carpet, one beside the chair of every guest, would only the crumbs of the dainties be cast to them—would only a passing glance, a passing thought, be vouchsafed to them? Yet the actual facts, the real relations of each Dives and Lazarus, are not altered by the intervention of the house wall between the table and the sick-bed—by the few feet of ground (how few!) which are indeed all that separate the merriment from the misery.”<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin believed, with many other social reformers since his time, that the housing question lies at the root of the misery in great cities; and when upon his father's death he became possessed of a considerable fortune, he found occasion to make some personal contribution towards a remedy. Fortunate accident had associated him in other interests with Miss Octavia Hill. In the slums, as they then were, of Marylebone, he now bought house property, of which he entrusted the management to Miss Hill. “I felt the evil [of housing conditions] so strongly,” he wrote in *Time and Tide*, “that I bought in the worst part of London, one freehold and one leasehold property, consisting of houses inhabited by the lowest poor; in order to try what change in their comfort and habits I could effect by taking only a just rent, but that firmly.” It was this enterprise that first gave Miss Octavia Hill the opportunity of starting those experiments in rent-collecting and house-management as a form of social service with which her name will ever honourably be associated. The root-ideas of her work were the idea in connexion with slum property of personal responsibility, and the idea of personal service, to the poor.

<sup>1</sup> *The Opening of the Crystal Palace*, Library Edition, vol. xii. p. 430.

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The houses which belonged to Ruskin were in Paradise Place and Freshwater Place.

Of Ruskin's own personal service, his long connexion with the Working Men's College bears record ; but I am not here writing his life or recounting his work. This chapter is concerned only with houses in London in which he lived or which he owned, and places with which he was in some peculiar degree connected. It is one of the fascinations of London that its stones are so rich in associations with the great men of letters. " You cannot touch the railings of St. James's Square," says Lord Rosebery, " hideous as they are and dull as are the houses that surround them, without thinking that Johnson and Savage, hungry boys, walked round that Square one summer night and swore that they would stand by their country." And to quote another writer, than whom none, as I must think, has treated the romance of London with a defter touch : " Whether we walk blissfully through Fleet Street with Johnson and Goldsmith, linger by the Temple fountain with Charles Lamb or Dickens, or traverse the glades of Kensington Gardens with Addison or Steele, ' where'er we tread is holy, haunted ground.' " <sup>1</sup> A dingy house in Bloomsbury is the birth-place of the writer who opened to his generation new windows into the beautiful ; and there are mean shops and houses in Marylebone which tell of his eagerness as a social reformer. Even the mud of London has its associations—not with Ruskin only, for " we may all tread the same road as that once trodden by Rossetti and Keats—strange road :

‘ Miring his outward steps who inly trode  
The bright Castalian brink and Patmos' steep.' "

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<sup>1</sup> *Highways and Byways in London*, by Mrs. E. T. Cook.

## CHAPTER II

### HERNE HILL AND DENMARK HILL

"Here the surface of things is certainly humdrum, the streets dingy, the green places, where the child goes a-maying, tame enough. But nowhere are things more apt to respond to the brighter weather, nowhere is there so much difference between rain and sunshine, nowhere do the clouds roll together more grandly; those quaint suburban pastorals gathering a certain quality of grandeur from the background of a great city, with its weighty atmosphere, and portent of storm in the rapid light on dome and bleached stone steeples."

So wrote Mr. Pater of the suburbs of London, and it was among such surroundings that Ruskin spent a large portion both of his childhood and of his middle life. If his earliest home was ill-attuned to his natural bent, the same cannot be said, except with large reservations, of his second and third houses. When he was four years old, his parents moved from Hunter Street to Herne Hill. Here he found a garden, country lanes, and open views. They are all described in *Præterita*; but they are among the scenes of that book which have passed away. The names indeed remain. The long ridge is still called Herne Hill; there is still a road known as "Croxted Lane"<sup>1</sup>; and they have given Ruskin's name ("Ruskin Walk") to a footpath which he describes so fondly in *Præterita*. But the whole region has been "developed," as Acts of Parliament now call it; and the rural charm has disappeared.

Two houses on Herne Hill were at different times, and for different periods, Ruskin's home, and with one or other of them are associated portions of his two principal books. The house to

<sup>1</sup> The lane, as it was in Ruskin's early days, is described not in *Præterita*, but in the opening of *Fiction, Fair and Foul*.

## HERNE HILL & DENMARK HILL

which his parents moved from Hunter Street is No. 28 Herne Hill. This was Ruskin's "home" for nineteen years (1823-1842), and a "haunt," as we shall see, for a much longer period. It was the home in which he wrote his *juvenilia* (so far as they were not written at Oxford or on his travels), but the claim often made for the house that *Modern Painters* was also written in it requires abatement. Some of the first volume may have been written there, but that is all. In the autumn of 1842, his father moved to Denmark Hill, and it was during the ensuing winter and spring that the bulk of the volume was written. But the removal did not break Ruskin's connexion with Herne Hill. His father had a long lease of No. 28, and upon his removal to Denmark Hill it was, I suppose, sub-let. The leasehold interest passed upon the father's death (1864) to the son, and for some years he used the house as a kind of museum for his geological and other collections. In 1871 when he removed from South London to Coniston, he gave the remainder of his lease to his cousin, and adopted daughter, Miss Joan Agnew, upon her marriage to Mr. Arthur Severn, who in 1886 renewed the lease on his own account. Mr. and Mrs. Severn lived there until Ruskin's death in 1901 (and for a few years after), and the house thus continued to be one of Ruskin's haunts. His old nursery on the top floor was kept by Mrs. Severn as Ruskin's room; there he stayed frequently during visits to London; and in that room were written many of his later pieces. It was in the nursery of his old home that he wrote, for instance, the preface to *Præterita*.

The house which has thus so long an association with Ruskin is now deserted. I visited the house and garden the other day (August 1912); I was shown his "nursery" and wandered in the pleasant garden at the back of the house in which so many of his hours in childhood were spent. The almond and apple blossom

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is still there in due season, as the sketch (made in April 1912) shows (Plate II) ; but the views have been built out and the house itself, much dilapidated, is, I believe, doomed to early demolition. There was at one time an idea of purchasing it by public subscription and converting it into a Ruskin Museum ; but memorials of Ruskin in this part of London ultimately took different forms, though the County Council has affixed a tablet upon the house.

The adjoining house, No. 30, now known as Fairmount, was also for a time Ruskin's home. In the summer of 1852 he had returned from a long sojourn in Venice, with the second and third volumes of the *Stones* to write. The first volume had been written, as already stated (p. 6), in London ; but " I could not live any more," he wrote to Samuel Rogers, " in Park Street with a dead brick wall opposite my windows." His father had accordingly furnished for him a house on Herne Hill (No. 30) ; there Ruskin and his wife resided till the following spring, and there the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* was prepared for the press.

In 1842 Ruskin's father, with whom things were going well in the wine-trade, bethought him that a prosperous merchant might justly possess greater stateliness of domicile than was afforded by the small house and garden on Herne Hill. Suitable dignity was found on a neighbouring hill, where also, as readers of Thackeray will remember, the Misses Dobbin resided. They would " call in their carriage to take Amelia and Georgy to pass a day with them ; " and though Amelia resented somewhat the gentle patronage, " Georgy was always glad to go to that fine garden-house at Denmark Hill, where there were such fine grapes in the hot-houses and peaches on the wall." Ruskin's was just such a house. There were seven acres of garden-ground attached to it. These composed, as he said in one of his Oxford Catalogues, " thickets of standard peach and of plum and pear trees," and a hawthorn





RUSKIN'S HOUSE ON HERNE HILL





## HERNE HILL & DENMARK HILL

walk in which the nightingales sang ; and as for the hot-houses, they furnished, as he says in *Fors Clavigera*, " camellias and azaleas for the ante-room of my library, and everybody says when they come in How pretty ! and my young lady friends have leave to gather what they like to put in their hair when they are going to balls." But it is in *Præterita* that the fullest and fondest account of the house and grounds on Denmark Hill is to be found, and to those pages the reader must be referred for descriptions of the scene pictured in our plate (III). His study-window, it may be stated, was immediately above the verandah. The house on Denmark Hill (No. 163) was Ruskin's home, with short intervals for nearly thirty years (1843-1872) ; it was associated, as he said, by dated newspaper, with a quarter of a century of his English life, and there he wrote many of his best-known works—among them, the four later volumes of *Modern Painters*, *The Elements of Drawing*, *Sesame and Lilies*, *The Ethics of the Dust*, and *The Crown of Wild Olive*. Ruskin's house and grounds still remain (with many alterations and additions), and it is safe to assert that visitors will be welcomed there—especially if they come to stay, for the house, now known as " Ruskin Manor," has become a Residential Hotel.<sup>1</sup> If you have gone first to Herne Hill by rail or tramway or omnibus, a walk of five minutes, turning to the left as you come out of No. 28, will bring you to " Ruskin Manor " on Denmark Hill. Almost opposite to the Manor is a large open space which the London County Council has named " Ruskin Park."

Of his home upon Denmark Hill, Ruskin says that it had " every good in it, except nearness to a stream, that could with any reason be coveted by modest mortals." It commanded in his earlier days from the back windows uninterrupted view over

<sup>1</sup> Collectors of minor Ruskiniana may be advised of the existence of an illustrated booklet, *Ruskin Manor, Denmark Hill*, which serves as an advertisement of the establishment.

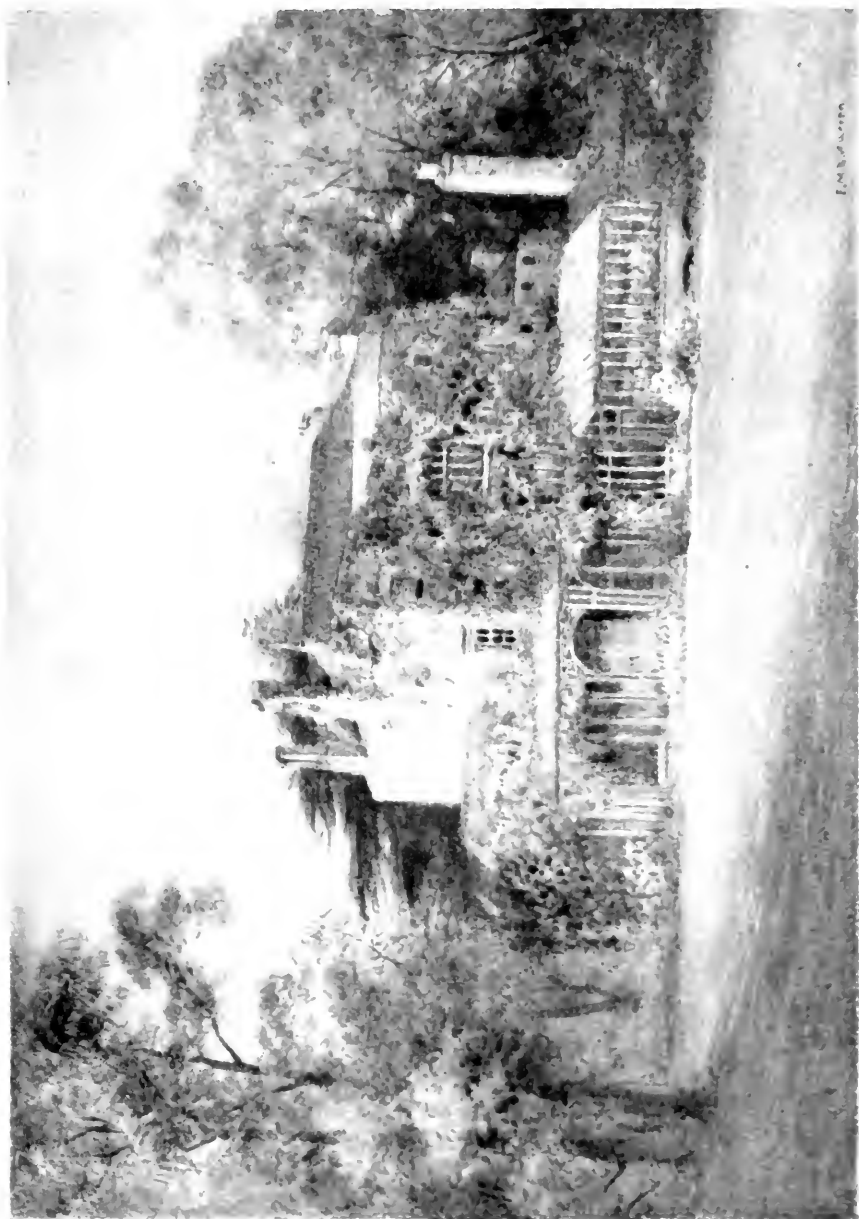
## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

fields and trees to the Norwood Hills, not as yet crowned with any crystal palace. It was within easy drive of London, and yet stood secluded in what was then almost the country. It was to Croxted Lane, leading from Herne Hill to Dulwich, that Ruskin used to go, in order to think over passages that needed turning and polishing in his books. The neighbourhood had also advantages for the student of art, since the Dulwich Gallery was near at hand. Dulwich is a charming place still, and in Ruskin's early days was more charming still, because the approach to it was more rural. You find a gallery in a garden now, but then you could have a country-walk to it as well. It was a favourite haunt of Robert Browning, in the days when he lived at Camberwell. "I so love that Gallery," he wrote to "E. B. B." in 1846, "having been used to go there when a child, far under the age allowed by the regulations—those two Guidos, the wonderful Rembrandt of Jacob's Vision, such a Watteau, the triumphant three Murillo pictures, a Giorgione music-lesson group, all the Poussins with the 'Armida' and 'Jupiter's Nursing'—and—no end to 'ands'—I have sate before one, some *one* of those pictures I had predetermined to see, a good half hour and then gone away . . . it used to be a green half hour's walk over the fields." It was no further from Herne Hill and Denmark Hill, and when Ruskin was writing the first volume of *Modern Painters* he was constantly there. But, alas! as some of us may well think, he used the Gallery but ill. He had a good word to say of one of the Poussins, but he went predetermined to swoop on the Dutchmen as his quarry. Perhaps sometimes, however, when he had done his day's execution upon the luckless artists who had to be debased that Turner might be exalted, he rested from the chase and drank in some of the quiet charm of the Gallery which breathes through this letter of 1871 from a friend and admirer of his. "I went



RUSKIN'S HOUSE ON DENMARK HILL







## HERNE HILL & DENMARK HILL

down to Dulwich last week," wrote James Smetham, an artist in letter-writing as well as with the brush, "to have a look at the Gallery. It is the most delightful gallery in arrangement and surroundings that I know, or know of. You don't turn out of a hot street, where on the hot pavement you meet hot and discontented people coming out in lavender and straw-coloured gloves, irritated with British art, like a bull that has seen a red rag (the ingrates !). You walk along a breezy quiet road—' This way to the Picture Gallery '—under green trees, after green fields, and you give a little gravelly side turn, and—' The Picture Gallery is now open.' How kind ! How civil ! How silent ! You write your name in a visitors' book, and see that yesterday John Ruskin was here. Then you begin your lounging round, and note the thin browns of old Teniers' ' Caves of Temptation,' and Gerhard Dow's ' Old Woman and Porridge Pot,' and Gainsborough's ' Mrs. Siddons.' All is sober and uncrowded, and well lighted and profoundly still. . . . The keeper of the Gallery comes and peers at you over his spectacles. He is not quite sure in his little room which are the pictures and which are the visitors, and he's come to see." If Smetham is to be taken literally (which, as the reader will have noted, is not always to be assumed), Ruskin revisited his old haunt in 1871 ; but the time when, as his diary shows, he was most often there was nearly thirty years earlier. There he might have met a studious lad whom in after years he was to know and encourage ; for Holman Hunt tells us in the story of his boyhood that the Dulwich Gallery was one of his early haunts.

There are other places in the immediate neighbourhood of Herne Hill and Denmark Hill which are closely associated with Ruskin—places of worship especially. There is, for instance, Beresford Chapel in Walworth, described inimitably both by

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

Ruskin and by Burne-Jones, who also did penance there as a child. Then there is St. Giles's, Camberwell, in which the east window was partly designed by Ruskin (in 1844). And there is Camden Church, in the Peckham Road, in which he sat under Mr. Melvill, and in the enlargement of which he took some part. In the Church of St. Paul on Herne Hill itself, restored by Street in 1858, a monumental tablet has been placed in memory of Ruskin. It bears the following inscription :—

“John Ruskin, M.A., D.C.L., LL.D. Born in Bloomsbury, 8 Feb. 1819. Brought to 28 Herne Hill by his parents in 1823, he dwelt on Herne and Denmark Hill for 50 years. His later days were chiefly lived upon the shores of Coniston Lake. Yet under the roof where he grew up he had a home in the Parish to the end, the house having passed into the possession of his cousin and adopted daughter, Joan, and her husband, Arthur Severn. Died at Brantwood, 20 Jan., buried at Coniston, 25 Jan. 1900. *The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails well fastened are the words of the masters of assemblies.*”

Herne Hill and Denmark Hill were in Ruskin's early days on the edge, as I have said, of the open country. The road thence by Norwood to Addington lay, he tells us, at that time “through a quite secluded district of field and wood, traversed here and there by winding lanes, and by one or two smooth mail-coach roads.” The walk to the Addington Hills was a favourite one with Ruskin and his father. They took much pleasure, Ruskin tells us, in “the heather, and the gleaming of bluebells amongst it,” when his father, in broken health, sought any English ground that Scottish flowers grew on; “so that I thought it would please him to be laid to his last rest at the feet of those brown hills.” The grave is in the pretty churchyard of Shirley, and there, seven years later, Ruskin laid his mother to rest also. The tomb (Plate IV) is of Aberdeen granite, and was designed by Ruskin. The granite slab is supported by a delicate moulding copied from his favourite tomb of Ilaria di Caretto at Lucca, with



THE TOMB OF HIS PARENTS SHIRLEY



## HERNE HILL & DENMARK HILL

a slender green serpentine shaft at each corner. On the granite slab, in raised bronze letters, is the following inscription :—

HERE RESTS,  
FROM DAY'S WELL-SUSTAINED BURDEN,  
JOHN JAMES RUSKIN.  
BORN IN EDINBURGH, MAY 10TH 1785,  
HE DIED IN HIS HOUSE IN LONDON,  
MARCH 3RD, 1864.  
HE WAS AN ENTIRELY HONEST MERCHANT,  
AND HIS MEMORY  
IS TO ALL WHO KEEP IT  
DEAR AND HELPFUL.  
HIS SON,  
WHOM HE LOVED TO THE UTTERMOST,  
AND TAUGHT TO SPEAK TRUTH,  
SAYS THIS OF HIM.

Ruskin's inscription to his mother, on the east side of the monument, is equally beautiful :—

HERE,  
BESIDE MY FATHER'S BODY,  
I HAVE LAID  
MY MOTHER'S.  
NOR WAS DEARER EARTH  
EVER RETURNED TO EARTH,  
NOR PURER LIFE  
RECORDED IN HEAVEN.  
SHE DIED DEC. 5TH, 1871,  
AGED 90 YEARS.

# HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

Mrs. Severn, when Ruskin himself died, added yet another inscription :—

JOHN RUSKIN,  
SON OF JOHN JAMES RUSKIN  
AND MARGARET HIS WIFE,  
WHO WROTE THUS OF HIS PARENTS  
AND EVER SPOKE TRUTH,  
WAS BORN IN LONDON, FEBRUARY 8TH, 1819,  
DIED AT BRANTWOOD, JANUARY 20TH, 1900,  
AND RESTS IN CONISTON CHURCHYARD.

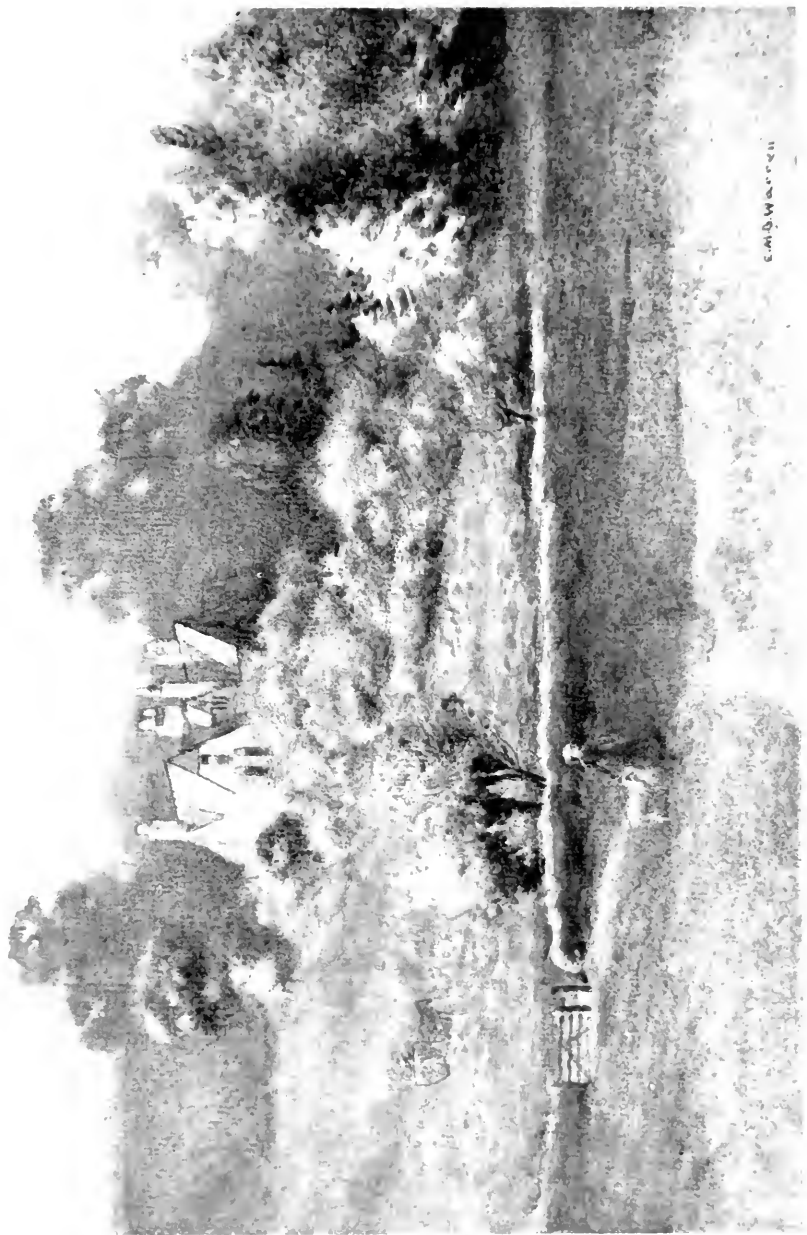
Shirley is not far from Croydon, and that town was one of the haunts of Ruskin's childhood. His mother was the daughter of the landlady of the King's Head Inn and Tavern in the Market Street. His mother's sister married a baker in the town, and lived in a little house which was still standing when Ruskin wrote his reminiscences—"the fashionablest in Market Street, having actually two windows over the shop, in the second story." Every reader of *Præterita* will remember Ruskin's Croydon aunt, and his account of days spent with her. The house can, however, be seen no longer; both it, and the King's Head, have been demolished.

Another spot in the south-eastern suburbs of London is closely connected with Ruskin. This is Orpington, the scene (after a short time at Keston) of his famous publishing experiment. Other authors were content to grumble, individually or in Incorporated Societies, against the publishers and the booksellers. The "unpractical" Ruskin was the first to shake himself free from the trammels and to establish a publisher and bookseller of his own, and on his own terms. The experiment, after some initial difficulties and also after some compromises, turned out a great success,





SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON





## HERNE HILL & DENMARK HILL

and Ruskin became the father of the net-book system. It was a bold experiment, for Mr. George Allen had no previous experience of the business and he was started in it by Ruskin at a month's notice. "Mr. Ruskin has transferred his publishing," said a Trade Circular contemptuously, "to the middle of a country field in Kent." Our artist's drawing (Plate V) of Mr. Allen's villa, Sunnyside, bears out the description. Orpington has been much "developed" of recent years; the amalgamated S.E. and L.C. & D. railways run a large service of trains; and "eligible building plots" have been largely taken up. The publishing business has now been removed to London, but the house and grounds—where Carlyle had been a visitor, as well as Ruskin—may still attract a literary pilgrim.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ENGLISH LAKES

“The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite ; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm  
By thought supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye.”—WORDSWORTH.

RUSKIN was by adoption a child of the Lake Country, and his work has some obvious affinity with the Lake School. His love of mountains may have come to him at birth, or may have been inspired by force of contrast with Brunswick Square ; but however that may be, it was in the Lake Country that the love was fostered. His, as he says in *Præterita*, was “ a Cumberland-built soul.” He was taken early, he writes elsewhere, to Cumberland, and this was “ the most important part of his Science and Art education ” ; it formed, as he explains in yet another place, his “ love of landscape and of painting.” Why, it may be asked, “ of painting ” ? A passage in one of his later Oxford lectures gives the clue. You will never love art well, he had somewhere written, unless you love what she mirrors better ; and in *The Art of England* he declared that the foundation of his work in art was not love of art for its own sake, but love of mountains and of sea. He spent long days, as a child, in rambling on the hillsides of the Lake Country, or in staring at the lines of surf on sand ; and when he was taken by his father to the picture exhibitions, he sought out

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the pieces which mirrored purple mountains or lakes or sea. "The best in this kind are but shadows." Ruskin loved them for the realities behind.

It was, then, the English Lake district that formed his taste and directed his work. His father made annual driving tours, on which the prosecution of business as a wine-merchant was combined with sentimental pilgrimage to places of natural beauty, and on these tours Ruskin from very early years accompanied his parents. In his fifth, in his seventh, and again in his eleventh year, the boy spent many weeks among the English Lakes. He was among them again during two Long Vacations in his undergraduate days. The first printed piece from his pen was a poem (written when he was nine, and printed two years later), "On Skiddaw and Derwent Water." The best of his early prose pieces—*The Poetry of Architecture*—was directly inspired by the cottages of the Lake Country. The longest of his early "poems" was an *Iteriad* describing with great minuteness, through more than two thousand lines, a "Three Weeks' Tour among the Lakes" in 1830. The lines are often pedestrian, but they reveal an already acutely observant eye. "The more one reads the boy's poem," says Canon Rawnsley in his excellent monograph upon *Ruskin and the English Lakes*, "the more one is struck with the way in which that little lad of eleven saw and noted what was really best worth seeing in the district."

Pervicacity was a strong note in Ruskin's character, and his early impressions of the Lake scenery never passed away. He has illustrated a similar point in connexion with the art of Turner. "Whatever is to be truly great and affecting," he writes in *Modern Painters*, "must have on it the strong stamp of the native land. The rule holds in landscape; yet so far less

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authoritatively, that the material nature of all countries and times is in many points actually, and in all, in principle, the same ; so that feelings educated in Cumberland may find their food in Switzerland, and impressions first received among the rocks of Cornwall be recalled upon the precipices of Genoa. Add to this actual sameness, the power of every great mind to possess itself of the spirit of things once presented to it, and it is evident that little limitation can be set to the landscape-painter as to the choice of his field ; and that the law of nationality will hold with him only so far as a certain joyfulness and completion will be by preference found in those parts of his subject which remind him of his own land. I do not know in what district of England Turner first or longest studied, but the scenery whose influence I can trace most definitely throughout his works, varied as they are, is that of Yorkshire. Of all his drawings, I think, those of the Yorkshire series have the most heart in them, the most affectionate, simple, unwearied, serious finishing of truth. There is in them little seeking after effect, but a strong love of place ; little exhibition of the artist's own powers or peculiarities, but intense appreciation of the smallest local minutiae. The affection to which they owe their excellence is to be traced, not only in these drawings of the places themselves, but in the peculiar love of the painter for rounded forms of hills ; not but that he is right in this on general principles, for I doubt not, that with his peculiar feeling for beauty of line, his hills would have been rounded still, even if he had studied first among the peaks of Cadore ; but rounded to the same extent, and with the same delight in their roundness, they would not have been. It is, I believe, to those broad wooded steeps and swells of the Yorkshire downs that we in part owe the singular massiveness that prevails in Turner's mountain drawing, and gives it one of its chief elements



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of grandeur.”<sup>1</sup> Something of the same affectionate recurrence to early impressions may be traced in Ruskin’s own case. I was much struck in reading his diaries and note-books by the frequency with which in his wanderings among grander scenery he made affectionate comparisons with the lakes and mountains of Cumberland and Westmorland.<sup>2</sup> The view of the winding lakes of Lombardy, as they are seen on the road from Varese to Laveno, was beautiful to him because it was like so many Windermeres, and scenery which otherwise displeased him was redeemed if he caught in the forms of the hills some resemblance to those around Derwent Water. He was often like Macaulay’s Jacobite who—

“ Heard on Lavernia Scargill’s whispering trees,  
And pined by Arno for my lovelier Tees.”

Skiddaw and Saddleback were to Ruskin the “ proper types of majestic form.”

There came a time, however, when a later love overclouded the earlier. Wordsworth, writing after two visits to the Alps, stoutly maintained the greater attractiveness of the mountains and lakes of his own home. Ruskin, on the other hand, in a letter to Miss Mitford,<sup>3</sup> written from Keswick in 1848, declares roundly that “ people who admire the English lakes and mountains after Switzerland do not understand Switzerland—even Wordsworth does not. Our mountains are mere bogs and lumps of spongy moorland, and our lakes are little swampy fishponds.” It would be absurd of course, though the mistake is sometimes

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. i. pt. ii. sec. i. ch. vii. (a little curtailed).

<sup>2</sup> The reader who has access to the Library Edition of Ruskin will find such passages cited in notes at vol. ii. p. xxx. and vol. iii. p. 232. See also what he says in *Præterita*, vol. ii. §§ 49, 99.

<sup>3</sup> Printed in *The Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford*, vol. ii. and reprinted in the Library Edition of Ruskin, vol. xxxvi. p. 87. Ruskin elaborates the point in a passage first printed in the Library Edition, vol. v. p. 435.

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made, to take every passing remark in a letter as a deliberate judgment ; but this remark to Miss Mitford, and especially its reference to Wordsworth, did really indicate one side of Ruskin's feelings about the Lake Country. His opinion of the Lake poets changed much as did his feeling for their mountains. " Though it is very proper," he wrote of Matthew Arnold's Selection from Wordsworth, " that Silver How should clearly understand and brightly praise its fraternal Rydal Mount, we must not forget that, over yonder, are the Andes, all the while." The paper in which the passage occurred gave an estimate of Wordsworth very different from that in writings of Ruskin's earlier time, when admiration was whole-hearted and he " hoped that efforts to depreciate the poet would not be successful." But Wordsworth is the most unequal of poets ; and a discriminating critic may accept, as alike just, the admiring praise and the qualifying criticism. The note of disparagement in Ruskin's later papers gave offence to some devoted admirers of both writers ; but it should not be forgotten that in the midst of the disparagement Ruskin took occasion to remark that he " had used Wordsworth as a daily text-book from youth to age." And similarly it was to the Lake Country, loved so eagerly in youth, that he returned in old age. Brantwood became one of a brotherhood with Rydal Mount and Silver How.

Ruskin's connexion with the Lake Country is thus very intimate. Of his ultimate home there, some account will be given in a later chapter. His earlier haunts were in many parts of the district. He often stayed as a child at Low-wood on Windermere, when the inn on the site of the present hotel was little more than a country cottage. The view thence of the upper reach of the lake, with Coniston Old Man, the Langdale Pikes, and Bowfell as a background, remains unspoilt and is

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happily unspoilable (unless, indeed, it be by the frequent interposition of motor-cars between you and the view); but already in 1867 Ruskin found the hotel too noisy and fashionable for him. He stayed also at the Salutation Inn in Ambleside, which in his early days was yet a rustic village; it was there that he wrote in 1847 his Review of Lord Lindsay's *Christian Art*. The "Crown" at Bowness was another of his inn-homes. I do not find that he ever stayed at the Ferry Hotel on the opposite side of the lake, which commands so fine a view of its waters both up and down, and which stays in my memory of former rambles as one of the most charming spots in the Lake district.

But there are few places in any part of the district which have not some association with Ruskin. A pilgrim desirous of following his footsteps should take not only the *Poems* for the sake of the "Iteriad" already mentioned, but also the *Letters to a College Friend*. In one of these letters Ruskin enumerates for his friend's benefit the mountains which should be ascended, in an order of merit, appraises the views which they severally command, and recommends some favourite walks. His preferences, as shown in this letter, were much the same as Southey's. Ruskin bids his college friend not to miss Watendlath. "The circuit formed by passing behind Barrow and Lodore to the vale of Watendlath, placed up high among the hills, with its own little lake and village, and the rugged path leading thence down to Borrowdale was," we are told, "one of the walks which Southey most admired." Ruskin, again like Southey, specially liked the view from Causey Pike, and he tells his friend to take another walk, beginning with Walla Crag; a walk on which Southey used to take all his guests, pausing at the point where may be seen "the lower part of Derwent Water below, with the islands; the vale of Keswick with Skiddaw for its huge boundary and bulwark

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to the north ; and where Bassenthwaite stretches into the open country, a distance of water, hills and remote horizon in which Claude would have found all he desired, and more than he could have represented, had he beheld it in the glory of a midsummer sunset.”<sup>1</sup>

It is with Keswick and Derwent Water that Ruskin's association, before the later years of Brantwood, is most close. In giving account in *Modern Painters* of his own feeling for landscape, it was to Derwent Water that his mind went back :—

“ The first thing which I remember, as an event in life, was being taken by my nurse to the brow of Friar's Crag on Derwent Water (Plate VI) ; the intense joy, mingled with awe, that I had in looking through the hollows in the mossy roots, over the crag, into the dark lake, has associated itself more or less with all twining roots of trees ever since. Two other things,” he goes on to say, “ I remember as, in a sort, beginnings of life ;—crossing Shapfells (being let out of the chaise to run up the hills), and going through Glenfarg, near Kinross, in a winter's morning, when the rocks were hung with icicles ; these being culminating points in an early life of more travelling than is usually indulged to a child. In such journeyings, whenever they brought me near hills, and in all mountain ground and scenery, I had a pleasure, as early as I can remember, and continuing till I was eighteen or twenty, infinitely greater than any which has been since possible to me in anything ; comparable for intensity only to the joy of a lover in being near a noble and kind mistress, but no more explicable or definable than that feeling of love itself.”<sup>2</sup> On Derwent Water, then, Ruskin received this lover's initiation. No inconsiderable portion of his life was devoted to another love—

<sup>1</sup> Southey's *Colloquies*, vol. i. p. 122, and *Life and Correspondence*, vol. vi. p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. xvii. (“ The Moral of Landscape ”).



FRIAR'S CRAG, DERWENTWATER







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that of mineralogy ; and it was at the Crosthwaite Museum in Keswick that his initiation therein took place.<sup>1</sup> It was to Keswick that he went for a few days after his marriage in April 1848. Twenty years later (1867), when Ruskin suffered the first warning mischief to his health, in giddiness and mistiness of head and eyes, it was to Keswick and Derwent Water that he went to walk and row himself well again. Many of his letters written thence at the time are given in the Library Edition of his Works, and should be consulted by those who wish to follow his footsteps closely. They show him ascending Grassmoor and Saddleback, and spending long days on Skiddaw. It must have been in 1867 that he made acquaintance with a man to whom he was afterwards much attracted. " I met Ruskin first," says Frederic Myers, " in my own earliest home, beneath the spurs of Skiddaw—its long slopes ' bronzed with deepest radiance,' as the boy Wordsworth had seen them long since in even such an evening's glow. Since early morning Ruskin had lain and wandered in the folds and hollows of the hills ; and he came back grave as from a solemn service, from day-long gazing on the heather and the blue." <sup>2</sup> The account, given by another writer, of a day with Ruskin on Derwent Water, refers to the same year, 1867. " He was staying," says Canon Rawnsley, " at the hotel at Portinscale, and arranged for a friend to come over with her hostess to spend a long day with him on Derwent Water. . . . ' If there is one thing I can claim to be able to do,' he said, ' it is to guide you to all that is best worth seeing and caring for on this lake. I know every tree and stone upon its shores, and the colour of every shallow and the clear deeps of every pool.' So saying, he embarked, and leaving the river mouth and its rustling reeds they

<sup>1</sup> As related in *Deucalion* ; see Library Edition, vol. xxvi. p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, p. 90.

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coasted all down the quiet western shore, touching land here and there to see the particular beauty of this or that tree or rock, loitering here to get some effect of gleam upon the grassy bottom of the lake, or rowing there to see a special reflected light on ripple or in shadow, he talking all the time of the wonder and the glory round about them.”<sup>1</sup>

It is fitting that on Derwent Water, if anywhere else than at Coniston, a monument to Ruskin should have been placed. On Friar’s Crag, a simple monolithic block of Borrowdale stone, rough and unhewn as it came from the quarry, is inscribed in his memory and bears a medallion of his head in bronze. The medallion, the work of Signor Lucchesi, is inset upon the side of the stone which faces the lake, and underneath it are inscribed the words from *Modern Painters* referring to Ruskin’s earliest memory of the spot. Upon the other side is incised a simple Chi-Rho, enclosed in a circle, with the following inscription beneath from *Deucalion* :—

“ *The Spirit of God is around you in the air that you breathe,—His glory in the light that you see ; and in the fruitfulness of the earth, and the joy of its creatures, He has written for you, day by day, His revelation, as He has granted you, day by day, your daily bread.*”

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<sup>1</sup> *Ruskin and the English Lakes*, p. 28.

## CHAPTER IV

### SCOTLAND

" Haunted spring and dale."—MILTON.

RUSKIN, though by birth a Londoner and a child by adoption of the English Lake district, may yet be claimed as in some sort half a Scotsman. As this is not a biography, the reader need not be troubled with any of the researches which biographers too often push to the point of tiresomeness about the remoter ancestry of their hero. Ruskin had some distant connexion with the Galloway family of Tweeddale, whence he derived, he said, " such dim gleam of ancestral honour " as he could claim. His own father was born and bred in Edinburgh. His father's sister married a Mr. Richardson of Perth, and much of his childhood was spent with his aunt in that city. He travelled much, as a child and a young man, with his parents in Scotland. He was married at Perth. He lectured in Edinburgh. He often visited Scotland in later years. And above all he was brought up on Sir Walter. The Index to his Works gives a rough and ready way of comparing his literary preferences and the influence which different books had upon him. The Bible comes easily first. The index of his Bible references and quotations occupies 58 columns of small print. Sir Walter Scott comes second with 16 ; Shakespeare, third with 10 ; and Dante, fourth with 9. Other authors are by comparison nowhere. The next in order are Wordsworth, Milton, Plato, and Spenser ; but none of these occupies so much as four columns. The Bible and Sir Walter

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were the food of Ruskin's youth, and the consolation of his age. He said, to be sure, that it was one of the griefs of his old age that he knew Scott by heart ; but the pleasure remained of reading him aloud to friends and relations. Scotland was thus doubly dear to Ruskin ; for the sake of early associations, and as the land of Sir Walter.

It was the force of association that drew Ruskin much to Scotland. To what extent association mingles with other influences in a man's perception of the beautiful is an intricate question in æsthetics. Ruskin devotes some pages to it in the second volume of *Modern Painters*. He combats stoutly the theory that the agreeableness in objects which we call " Beauty " is the result of the association with them of agreeable or interesting ideas. The theory involves, indeed, a confusion of terms. Association gives pleasure, and so does Beauty ; but that does not prove the two powers to be the same. Yet it is unquestionably true that the two powers are in fact largely, perhaps universally, intertwined. The perception that such and such a scene is beautiful is quickened, intensified, coloured, touched with emotion at every turn by the associative faculty, and thus it must always be matter of difficulty to distinguish between feelings due to the inherent beauty of scenery and those which are kindled when there is added, as Wordsworth has it, " a remoter charm by thought supplied." In Ruskin's own case, the English Lake district needed, he says, no charm of association to deepen the appeal which its realities made to his instinctive perceptions. In his feeling for Scottish scenery, on the other hand, he could not, in retrospect, disentangle his direct impressions from those which were partly derived from Sir Walter. He had read in childhood the *Abbot* at Kinross and the *Monastery* in Glen Farg. The streamlet in that glen of the Ochils was haunted for him by the

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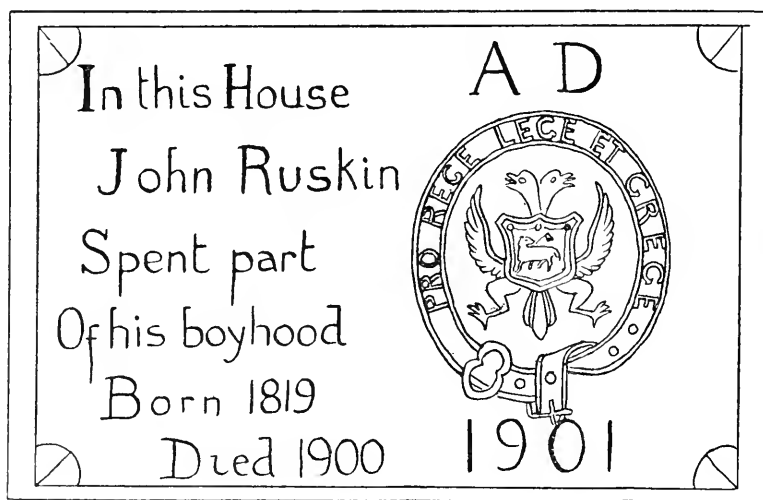
White Lady, and the island of Loch Leven by the Queen of Scots. And so, in later years, when love of Switzerland had weakened his sense of the beauty alike of Scotland and of the English Lakes, the force of association was yet powerful to cast a spell upon his feelings whenever he was in Scotland. He puts the point in some interesting letters which have been printed in the Library Edition.<sup>1</sup> There is no country, I suppose, which presents more appeal to the associative faculty than Scotland. "It is the peculiar character of Scottish scenery," says Ruskin himself, "as distinct from all other scenery on a small scale in North Europe, to have distinctively *mindable* features"—its several glens and streams, that is to say, have distinctive characters of their own, and "there is no other country in which the roots of memory are so entwined with the beauty of nature." I was reading the passage in *Præterita* the other day to a young friend. "How true that is," she said; "there is something not only 'mindable,' but positively haunting in Scottish scenery. I can close my eyes for an instant and get vivid pictures of places in various parts of Scotland only seen once or twice, though I find this difficult to do with much better known English landscape." Ruskin had at one time or another explored much of Scott's country; and I can conceive that some one, sufficiently equipped with local knowledge, and interested equally in Sir Walter and Ruskin, might find material for an interesting monograph (somewhat on the lines of Canon Rawnsley's *Ruskin and the English Lakes*) upon Ruskin and Sir Walter Scott's Country. The scope of the present chapter must be more restricted; concerned, as it is, not with Ruskin's incidental references to Scottish scenes in connexion with Sir Walter's works, but with his own homes and haunts in Scotland.

As a child, Ruskin had two homes in Scotland. His father's

<sup>1</sup> See vol. xii. p. xxi. and vol. xxxvi. p. 76.

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sister—the “ Aunt Jessie,” or “ Scottish Aunt,” of *Præterita*—had, as aforesaid, married a Mr. Richardson, of Perth. This uncle, a tanner by trade—“ Peter, the tanner ”—lived in a square-built, grey-stone house in the suburb of the city known as Bridge End, with a garden sloping steeply to the Tay. The house, which is situated some fifty yards north of the bridge, has not been altered, so far as I am aware, since the days of Ruskin’s childhood. A memorial tablet in bronze, with the city arms of Perth, has been placed on the house :—



Miss Warren’s drawing of the house (Plate VII) was taken from the end of the bridge, and shows the Grampians in the distance. Upon the death of Uncle Peter, his widow moved to a house in Rose Terrace, about ten minutes’ walk from the other, on the opposite side of the bridge.

The Lead—a stream “ led ” from the Tay—runs by the side of the meadow called the North Inch and past Rose Terrace, so that there, as before at Bridge End, Ruskin had the delight of



THE HOUSE OF RUSKIN'S AUNT AT PERTH







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running water. The house in the Terrace, No. 10, has a like memorial tablet upon it to that upon the house at Bridge End. In these homes at Perth, we may picture Ruskin as a child dabbling in the pools of Tay, or gazing at the hills of Kinnoul, or playing with his cousins on the meadow. But it is needless to continue, for all these things are inimitably told in *Præterita*, and here and there in *Fors Clavigera*<sup>1</sup> there is an additional touch as when he describes a summer evening by the edge of the North Inch, "where the Tay is wide, just below Scone, and the snowy quartz pebbles decline in long banks under the ripples of the dark clear stream."

"A singular awe developed itself in me," says Ruskin in describing his childhood at Perth, "both of the pools of Tay, where the water changed from brown to blue-black, and of the precipices of Kinnoul; partly out of my own mind, and partly because the servants always became serious when we went up Kinnoul way, especially if I wanted to stay and look at the little crystal spring of Bower's Well." They were familiar, we may suppose, with a sombre association. Beside the spring is the house called by the same name. Ruskin's paternal grandfather, a merchant of varying fortune, was settled at Bowerswell in his later years, and there he had died by his own hand. The house afterwards passed into the possession of friends of Ruskin's father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. George Gray. Ruskin's mother, I have been told, would never enter the house, after the tragic event just mentioned, and used to talk with her friend, Mrs. Gray, over the garden wall. It was at Bowerswell that Ruskin in 1848 was married to Miss Euphemia Gray; the marriage was annulled in 1854, and in the following year she married Millais. The garden at Bowerswell is familiar to every visitor, though he may not know it, to the Tate Gallery, for it is shown in Millais's famous picture of "The Vale of Rest." The artist, as his wife recorded,

<sup>1</sup> Letter 52 (Library Edition, vol. xxviii. p. 302).

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“ was determined to paint nuns some day, and one night this autumn (1858), being greatly impressed with the beauty of the sunset (it was the end of October), he rushed for a large canvas, and began at once upon it, taking for background the wall of our garden at Bowerswell, with the tall oaks and poplar trees behind it. The sunsets were lovely for two or three nights, and he dashed the work in, softening it afterwards in the house, making it, I thought, even less purple and gold than when he saw it in the sky. The effect lasted so short a time that he had to paint like lightning.” “ The background,” adds the artist’s son, “ remains very much to-day what it was when Millais painted it. A few of the old trees are gone, but there are the same green terraces, and the same sombre hedges ; there, too, is the corner of the house which, under the artist’s hands, appeared as an ivy-covered chapel. The grave itself he painted from one freshly made in Kinnoul churchyard.”<sup>1</sup> There is a fir-tree in the garden which, as Mr. Gray told Miss Warren, he and Ruskin had planted, sixty-five years since, when they were young men ; it is shown in our picture (Plate VIII) to the left of the house. The old well is now enclosed in Mr. Gray’s garden for better preservation.

From Perth we must journey, in following Ruskin’s footsteps, to the Trossachs. He had been there in 1838 on a summer tour with his parents, and in *Præterita* may be found a beautiful description of the inlet of Loch Katrine, as it is pictured in Scott and as it still existed when Ruskin first saw it. Forty years later, he was talking at Hawarden with Gladstone, who dropped the remark that “ Sir Walter had made Scotland.” The sequel is reported by Canon Holland, who was also of the party : “ On Mr. Ruskin’s inquiry as to the meaning of the phrase, Mr. Gladstone began telling of the amazing contrast between the means of communication in Scotland before Sir Walter wrote compared with the present

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais*, vol. i. p. 329.



BOWERSWELL, PERTH



English House





## SCOTLAND

day, mentioning the number of coaches that were now conveying masses of happy trippers up and down the Trossachs. Mr. Ruskin's face had been deepening with horror, and at last he could bear it no longer. 'But, my dear sir,' he broke out, 'that is not making Scotland; it is unmaking it!'" Ruskin's outburst will be understood by those who remember the passage in *Præterita*, in which after the description of the Trossachs in earlier days he says, "And all that the nineteenth century conceived of wise and right to do with this piece of mountain inheritance, was to thrust the nose of a steamer into it, plank its blaeberreries over with a platform, and drive the populace headlong past it as fast as they can scuffle." But at an earlier date Ruskin still heard the call of the Trossachs. In the early summer of 1853 he had finished *The Stones of Venice*, and was in need of a change. He had recently made a cordial friendship with Millais, who was also preparing to take a holiday. They decided to go together; and the party of five—Ruskin and his wife, a girl friend of the latter, Millais and his brother—started for the Trossachs. Millais and his brother took rooms at the New Trossachs Hotel; the Ruskins rented the schoolmaster's house, close by, at the Brig o' Turk over the Finlas; and there they remained for several weeks (mid-July to the end of October). In one of Ruskin's letters there is a rough sketch of the little house under Ben Ledi.<sup>1</sup> It has, I believe, been repaired, but a comparison of Miss Warren's drawing (Plate IX), made a year or two ago, shows little alteration. Glimpses of the holiday-party are given us, not only in Ruskin's own letters, but in various memoirs. "I have had a long letter," wrote Miss Mitford to a friend, "from John Ruskin, who is in the Highlands with two young friends—the Pre-Raphaelite painter and his brother, and his own beautiful wife. They are living in a hut on the borders of

<sup>1</sup> Letter 5 in *Letters from John Ruskin to F. J. Furnivall*. The sketch is facsimiled in the Library Edition of Ruskin, vol. xii. p. xxiv.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

Loch Achray, playing at cottagers as rich people do." "This year," wrote Millais to his friend Mr. Combe, "I am giving myself a holiday, as I have worked five years hard. Ruskin comes and works with us. We have in fine weather immense enjoyment painting out on the rocks, and having our dinner brought to us there, and in the evening climbing up the steep mountains for exercise." The summer thus spent by Ruskin and Millais is commemorated in the artist's famous portrait of the art-critic standing bare-headed by the Fall of Glenfinlas. "With rare conscientiousness," says Mr. Spielmann in his description of the picture, "Millais has recalled every detail in the scene, so that the geologist cannot find a flaw in his rocks, or a botanist mistake lichen, plant, or flower. This is almost the last of the more accentuated P.-R.-B. pictures, and shows perhaps the highest point to which his manual dexterity and subtlety attained; and proves, moreover, in its condition, how pure painting can defy Time itself." The rough sketch in the letter by Ruskin, already mentioned, indicates the spot at which the picture was painted. In the Ruskin Collection in the Oxford University Galleries there is a careful study by him of "Gneiss, with its weeds, above the stream of Glenfinlas." This is said to have been of service to Millais in working out the picture. Ruskin's literary work during their holiday in Glenfinlas was the Edinburgh *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*. Millais helped him with an illustration, and the lectures contain some references to their travels in Scotland. Recollections of the two men survive in the place. A year or two ago there was still an old post-mistress at Brig o' Turk who would talk to an inquiring traveller about them. She used to run errands for Ruskin, and he gave her not only a strong pair of boots, but a beautiful Scottish plaid, "enough to make two dresses." "Oh but he was a very kind gentleman," she said, "and Mr. Millais looked ever so handsome in a kilt."



RUSKIN'S LODGINGS IN GLENFINLAS





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Further north is another spot associated with Ruskin. At the foot of Schiehallion between Lochs Rannoch and Tummel is a shooting-lodge, called Crossmount, sheltered by a clump of pines from the four winds of the wilderness. It gives name to a chapter in Ruskin's autobiography, for there he stayed for some weeks in 1847 with a friend of his own age, William Macdonald. Ruskin had no taste for sport, and devoted himself instead, as he describes in *Præterita*, to "the laborious eradication of a crop of thistles which had been too successfully grown by northern agriculture in one of the best bits of unboggy ground by the Tummel." He eradicated them, and then he studied them. Several of his best botanical drawings are of thistles, and the study branched off, as was the way with him, into many directions, architectural and moral—as those who know *The Stones of Venice* and *Proserpina* will remember.

The extreme point of Ruskin's northern travels was reached ten years later, when the Scottish tour with his parents was extended to the Falls of Kilmorack and Cromarty Firth. On one or other of the journeys already mentioned he had seen many famous spots—such as Craig Ellachie and Killiecrankie, and on these and many other historic scenes he has written eloquent passages. But it is to Edinburgh and Scott's own country that he most often refers, and these were the places that he was fondest of visiting. In his later years Wigtownshire, the home of his cousin Mrs. Severn, became also very dear to him. His piece on Scott's homes is to be found in *Fors Clavigera*, and the reverence with which he approached them is shown in a letter which a famous diarist has printed. "Mr. Ruskin," wrote Mr. Rutson to Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff in 1883, "came to Laidlawstiel for two nights after I wrote to you. I was delighted with his courtesy and charming manner and eloquence. We went to Ashiestiel. You should have seen the reverent way in which he approached,

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with his hat off, an old man who had worked for Scott, and how he expressed his sense of the honour of seeing a man who had known Scott, and how the sense of his having known Scott must make the man himself very happy. All this said in a low and rich tone of Ruskin's beautiful voice, while he stood slightly bowed, made a memorable little picture." <sup>1</sup>

To Edinburgh Ruskin was attached for the sake of his own father, as well as of Scott, and nothing in the land of the mountain and the flood appealed to him more than the Castle Rock. It is, "as far as I know," he wrote, "simply the noblest in Scotland conveniently approachable by any creatures but sea-gulls or peewits. Ailsa and the Bass are of course, more wonderful; and, I suppose, in the West Highlands there are masses of crag more wild and fantastic; but people only go to see these once or twice in their lives, while the Castle Rock has a daily influence in forming the taste, or kindling the imagination, of every promising youth in Edinburgh. Even irrespectively of the position, it is a mass of singular importance among the rocks of Scotland. It is not easy to find among your mountains a 'craig' of so definite a form, and on so magnificent a scale. Among the central hills of Scotland, from Ben Nevis to the Lammermuirs, I know of none comparable to it; while besides being bold and vast, its bars of basalt are so nobly arranged, and form a series of curves at once so majestic and harmonious, from the turf at their base to the roots of the bastions, that, as long as your artists have that crag to study, I do not see that they need casts from Michael Angelo, or anyone else, to teach them the laws of composition or the sources of sublimity."

This chapter may fitly end as it began: the attraction of Scottish scenery to Ruskin was in large measure associative. The first lecture in *The Two Paths*, written after his northern journey

<sup>1</sup> Grant-Duff's *Notes from a Diary*, 1881-86, vol. i. p. 186.



## SCOTLAND

in 1857, and with the Indian Mutiny in his mind, gives his disinterested impressions of the Highlands :—

“ As I passed, last summer, for the first time, through the North of Scotland, it seemed to me that there was a peculiar painfulness in its scenery, caused by the non-manifestation of the powers of human art. I had never travelled in, nor even heard or conceived of, such a country before ; nor, though I had passed much of my life amidst mountain scenery in the south, was I before aware how much of its charm depended on the little gracefulnesses and tendernesses of human work, which are mingled with the beauty of the Alps or spared by their desolation. . . . The Highland cottage is literally a heap of grey stones, choked up, rather than roofed over, with black peat and withered heather ; the only approach to an effort at decoration consists in the placing of the clods of protective peat obliquely on its roof, so as to give a diagonal arrangement of lines, looking somewhat as if the surface had been scored over by a gigantic claymore. And, at least among the northern hills of Scotland, elements of more ancient architectural interest are equally absent. The solitary peel-house is hardly discernible by the windings of the stream ; the roofless aisle of the priory is lost among the enclosures of the village ; and the capital city of the Highlands, Inverness, placed where it might ennoble one of the sweetest landscapes, and by the shore of one of the loveliest estuaries in the world ;—placed between the crests of the Grampians and the flowing of the Moray Firth, as if it were a jewel clasping the folds of the mountains to the blue zone of the sea—is only distinguishable from a distance by one architectural feature, and exalts all the surrounding landscape by no other associations than those which can be connected with its modern castellated gaol.”

That is one aspect of the case ; but there is another which a

# HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

verse or two of the beautiful “ Canadian Boat Song ”<sup>1</sup> may serve to introduce :—

Listen to me, as when ye heard our father  
Sing long ago the song of other shores ;  
Listen to me, and then in chorus gather  
All your deep voices as ye pull your oars.

*Fair these broad meads—these hoary woods are grand ;  
But we are exiles from our father's land.*

From the lone shieling of the misty island,  
Mountains divide us and the waste of seas ;  
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,  
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

*Fair these broad meads—&c. &c.*

We ne'er shall tread the fancy-haunted valley,  
Where 'tween the dark hills creeps the small, clear stream ;  
In arms around the patriot banner rally,  
Nor see the moon on royal tombstones gleam.

*Fair these broad meads—&c. &c.*

“ You will find, upon reflection,” says Ruskin, “ that all the highest points of the Scottish character are connected with impressions derived straight from the natural scenery of their country. No nation has ever shown, in the general tone of its language—in the general current of its literature—so constant a habit of hallowing its passions and confirming its principles by direct association with the charm, or power, of nature. The writings of Scott and Burns—and yet more, of the far greater poets than Burns who gave Scotland her traditional ballads—furnish you in every stanza—almost in every line—with examples of this association of natural scenery with the passions ; but an

<sup>1</sup> *Blackwood's Magazine*, September 1829. The song with music has recently been published by Mr. Eneas Mackay, of Stirling.

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instance of its farther connection with the moral principle struck me forcibly just at the time when I was most lamenting the absence of art among the people. In one of the loneliest districts of Scotland, where the peat cottages are darkest, just at the western foot of that great mass of the Grampians which encircles the sources of the Spey and the Dee, the main road which traverses the chain winds round the foot of a broken rock called Crag, or Craig Ellachie. There is nothing remarkable in either its height or form ; it is darkened with a few scattered pines, and touched along its summit with a flush of heather ; but it constitutes a kind of headland, or leading promontory, in the group of hills to which it belongs—a sort of initial letter of the mountains ; and thus stands in the mind of the inhabitants of the district, the Clan Grant, for a type of their country, and of the influence of that country upon themselves. Their sense of this is beautifully indicated in the war-cry of the clan, *Stand fast, Craig Ellachie*. You may think long over those few words without exhausting the deep wells of feeling and thought contained in them—the love of the native land, the assurance of their faithfulness to it ; the subdued and gentle assertion of indomitable courage—I *may* need to be told to stand, but, if I do, Craig Ellachie does. You could not but have felt, had you passed beneath it at the time when so many of England's dearest children were being defended by the strength of heart of men born at its foot, how often among the delicate Indian palaces, whose marble was pallid with horror, and whose vermilion was darkened with blood, the remembrance of its rough grey rocks and purple heaths must have risen before the sight of the Highland soldier ; how often the hailing of the shot and the shriek of battle would pass away from his hearing, and leave only the whisper of the old pine branches,—*Stand fast, Craig Ellachie !*”

## CHAPTER V

### THE ROAD TO THE ALPS

"I well remember watching the line of the Black Forest hills enlarge and rise, as we crossed the plain of the Rhine. 'Gates of the hills,' opening for me to a new life—to cease no more, except at the Gates of the Hills whence one returns not."—RUSKIN in *Præterita*.

"FEELINGS educated in Cumberland may find their food in Switzerland." So Ruskin said, as already quoted, in the first volume of *Modern Painters*, and there can be no doubt that he was thinking of his own case. It was in 1833, when he was a boy of fourteen, that he first saw the Alps, and the vision of them kindled into intenser flame the feelings of joy in mountain-scenery which had been lighted among the English Lakes. Everybody who knows Ruskin's books must be familiar with the chapter in *Præterita* in which he describes the Swiss tour of 1833, and speaks of his arrival at the "Gates of the Hills" as the opening of a new life to him—the entrance into a mountain-kingdom which was henceforth to be his by the law of love.

The love was constant. Any year in which he did not have sight of the mountains of Switzerland or Savoy was deemed ill-spent or not enjoyed; and henceforth all roads pleased him only as they led to the Alps. "Although there are few districts of Northern Europe, however apparently dull or tame," he wrote in a later volume of *Modern Painters*, "in which I cannot find pleasure, though the whole of Northern France (except Champagne), dull as it seems to most travellers, is to me a perpetual Paradise; and, putting Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, and one or two such other perfectly flat districts aside, there is not an English

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county which I should not find entertainment in exploring the cross-roads of, foot by foot ; yet all my best enjoyment would be owing to the imagination of the hills, colouring, with their far-away memories, every lowland stone and herb. The pleasant French coteau, green in the sunshine, delights me, either by what real mountain character it has in itself (for in extent and succession of promontory the flanks of the French valleys have quite the sublimity of true mountain distances), or by its broken ground and rugged steps among the vines, and rise of the leafage above, against the blue sky, as it might rise at Vevey or Como. There is not a wave of the Seine but is associated in my mind with the first rise of the sandstones and forest pines of Fontainebleau ; and with the hope of the Alps, as one leaves Paris with the horses' heads to the south-west, the morning sun flashing on the bright waves at Charenton. . . . Putting Leicestershire or Staffordshire fairly beside Westmorland, and Lombardy or Champagne fairly beside the Pays de Vaud or the Canton Berne, I find the increase in the calculable sum of elements of beauty to be steadily in proportion to the increase of mountainous character."

To the Alps themselves, and Ruskin's homes and haunts among them, we shall come in later chapters. Our present concern is with the road to the mountains, and its hope of them. He has given many descriptions of the olden days of travel ; the best known are in *The Stones of Venice* and *Præterita*, and there is another, equally charming, in *Proserpina*. They combine rapturous delight in the memory of travel by posting-carriage with contemptuous pity or anger for the "simpletons" who now suffer themselves to be hurried and scurried, bustled and bumped, in railway trains. It is impossible to read Ruskin's descriptions without catching something of his delight, and without envying the ample leisure and well-filled purse which

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enabled him to enjoy so often the luxury of long-drawn-out travel in well-appointed carriages, with good horses, and in the first-floor rooms of the best inns. But one may share the rapture and indulge the envy without endorsing the contempt. "Going by railroad," says Ruskin, "I do not consider as travelling at all: it is merely being sent to a place and very little different from becoming a parcel." And again: "The railroad transmutes a man from a traveller into a living parcel. For the time he has parted with the nobler characteristics of his humanity for the sake of a planetary power of locomotion. Do not ask him to admire anything. You might as well ask the wind." Be it so; but, this granted, it only becomes a question of the point at which you cease to be "sent," and begin to travel. You may submit to the indignity of being sent to Lucerne or Geneva, and resume your nobler characteristics by travelling thence on foot or by carriage.

Thus Samuel Butler, in his delightful book of travel called *Alps and Sanctuaries*, counts it as one of the merits of his favourite haunt, Faido, that you can leave London on a Monday morning and be there next evening, and at the end of the book he says, "From Faido we returned home. We looked at nothing between the top of the St. Gothard Pass and Boulogne, nor did we again begin to take any interest in life till we saw the science-ridden, art-ridden, culture-ridden, afternoon-tea ridden cliffs of Old England rise upon the horizon." I have a much-prized copy of the first edition of Butler's book, and a previous owner has pencilled against the words "We looked at nothing," &c., an indignant "Oh!" But why? Why should not Butler have consented to be carried as a parcel to and from Faido? Once there, he began to travel as much to good purpose as Ruskin himself, who, in later journeys, was habitually sent by rail to Switzerland. No

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one abused railways more, or used them more, than he. Moreover—and here again Ruskin's experience in his later years may be cited—it may well be disputed whether the process of being sent by railway is always incompatible with admiration of the scenery.

On the Cenis line from Modane to Aix, Ruskin once found the journey "very enjoyable though dusty;" adding that "where the scenery is so huge the railroad merely makes a splendid moving panorama of it, not a whizzing dream." And another railway journey in the same district many years later he found "entirely divine—one enchantment of golden trees and ruby hills." A railway journey from Amiens to Beauvais pleased him no less: "every instant a really divine landscape of wood, harvest-field, and coteau." In such moods Ruskin, it will be seen, was at one with Stevenson, who noted "the admirable brevity and simplicity of such little glimpses of country and country ways as flash upon the traveller through the windows of the train; little glimpses that have a character all their own; sights seen as a travelling swallow might see them from the wing, or Iris as she went abroad over the land on some Olympian errand. . . . The speed is so easy, and the train disturbs so little the scenes through which it takes us, that our heart becomes full of the placidity and stillness of the country; and while the body is borne forward in the flying chain of carriages, the thoughts alight, as the humour moves them, at unfrequented stations; they make haste up the poplar alley that leads toward the town; they are left behind with the signalman as, shading his eyes with his hand, he watches the long train sweep away into the golden distance."<sup>1</sup>

It is not to be supposed, therefore, that Ruskin's road to the Alps was always the carriage-road; but it was to the posting

<sup>1</sup> "Ordered South," in *Virginibus Puerisque*.

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tours of olden days that he looked back with fondest memory, and it was the inns in the villages on the route that he regarded as his homes. Among the dearest of these places to him was one which is referred to in a famous passage of *The Seven Lamps*. "Among the hours of his life," he says, "to which the writer looks back with peculiar gratitude, as having been marked by more than ordinary fulness of joy or clearness of teaching, is one passed, now some years ago (1846), near time of sunset, among the broken masses of pine forest which skirt the course of the Ain, above the village of Champagnole, in the Jura. It is a spot which has all the solemnity, with none of the savageness, of the Alps; where there is a sense of a great power beginning to be manifested in the earth, and of a deep and majestic concord in the rise of the long, low lines of piny hills; the first utterance of those mighty mountain symphonies, soon to be more loudly lifted and wildly broken along the battlements of the Alps. But their strength is as yet restrained; and the far-reaching ridges of pastoral mountain succeed each other, like the long and sighing swell which moves over quiet waters from some far-off, stormy sea. And there is a deep tenderness pervading that vast monotony. The destructive forces and the stern expression of the central ranges are alike withdrawn. No frost-ploughed, dust-encumbered paths of ancient glacier fret the soft Jura pastures; no splintered heaps of ruin break the fair ranks of her forest; no pale, defiled, or furious rivers send their rude and changeful ways among her rocks. Patiently, eddy by eddy, the clear green streams wind along their well-known beds; and under the dark quietness of the undisturbed pines, there spring up, year by year, such company of joyful flowers as I know not the like of among the blessings of the earth. It was spring-time, too; and all were coming forth in clusters crowded for very love; there was room enough for



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all, but they crushed their leaves into all manner of strange shapes only to be nearer each other. There was the wood anemone, star after star, closing every now and then into *nebulæ*; and there was the oxalis, troop by troop, like virginal processions of the *Mois de Marie*, the dark vertical clefts in the limestone choked up with them as with heavy snow, and touched with ivy on the edges—ivy as light and lovely as the vine; and, ever and anon, a blue gush of violets, and cowslip bells in sunny places; and in the more open ground, the vetch, the comfrey, and *mezereon*, and the small sapphire buds of the *Polygala Alpina*, and the wild strawberry, just a blossom or two, all showered amidst the golden softness of deep, warm, amber-coloured moss. I came out presently on the edge of the ravine: the solemn murmur of its waters rose suddenly from beneath, mixed with the singing of the thrushes among the pine boughs; and, on the opposite side of the valley, walled all along as it was by grey cliffs of limestone, there was a hawk sailing slowly off their brow, touching them nearly with his wings, and with the shadows of the pines flickering upon his plumage from above; but with the fall of a hundred fathoms under his breast, and the curling pools of the green river gliding and glittering dizzily beneath him, their foam globes moving with him as he flew. It would be difficult to conceive a scene less dependent upon any other interest than that of its own secluded and serious beauty; but the writer well remembers the sudden blankness and chill which were cast upon it when he endeavoured, in order more strictly to arrive at the sources of its impressiveness, to imagine it, for a moment, a scene in some aboriginal forest of the New Continent. The flowers in an instant lost their light, the river its music; the hills became oppressively desolate; a heaviness in the boughs of the darkened forest showed how much of their former power had been dependent

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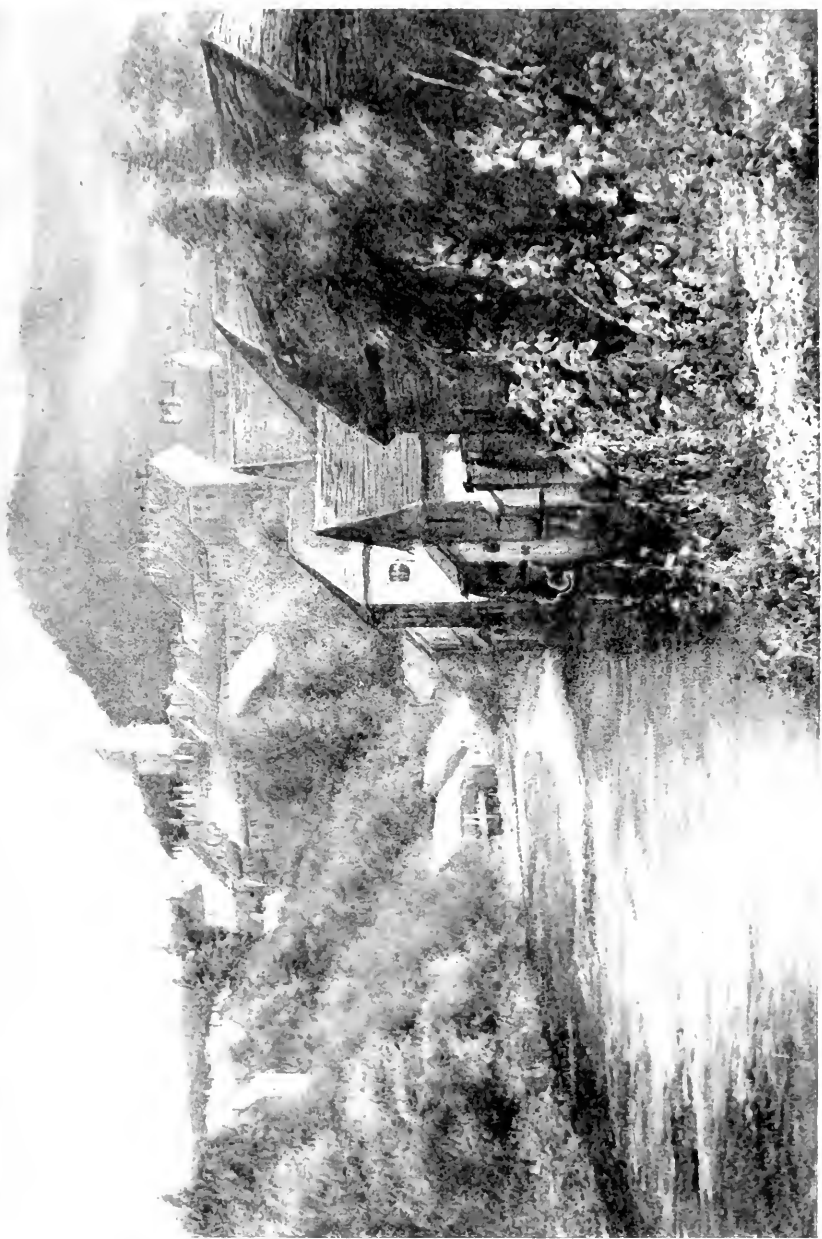
upon a life which was not theirs, how much of the glory of the imperishable, or continually renewed, creation is reflected from things more precious in their memories than it, in its renewing. Those ever-springing flowers and ever-flowing streams had been dyed by the deep colours of human endurance, valour, and virtue ; and the crests of the sable hills that rose against the evening sky received a deeper worship, because their far shadows fell eastward over the iron walls of Joux, and the four-square keep of Granson."

It was to his tour of 1846 that Ruskin referred in this introduction to "The Lamp of Memory," but Champagnole was an habitual stopping-place in all his early tours<sup>1</sup> on his way to and from the Alps. There is no place, except St. Martin and Chamouni, of which, in the pages of *Præterita*, he speaks with more affectionate memory, and none to which he more often applies the name of "home." He revisited it in 1882, as his companion Mr. Collingwood has described, and again on the last journey in 1888, when he declared that "his old home" might well have been "in the Earthly Paradise after Christ's Kingdom shall be come." Some of its radiance in his eyes was perhaps reflected by the Lamp of Memory ; and, though there are attractions in the place discoverable on due and sympathetic search, travellers are sometimes disappointed with Champagnole. The little town has no particular "objects of interest," but is pleasantly situated, as our drawing shows (Plate X). The glen of the Ain is pretty with green slopes and shady ways. Also it is "favourably known," says one of the guide-books, "for trout-fishing" ; and Ruskin (who had a thought for creature-comforts amidst even his best-beloved scenery) mentions "a couple of trout fried, just out of the river, of the richest flavour, followed by a roasted woodcock on delicate toast" as among the good things with which the

<sup>1</sup> Except the first (1833), when he went by the Rhine to Schaffhausen.



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landlady of the Hôtel de la Poste welcomed him. That old inn stood just above the bridge, opposite the town, and exists no longer. Modern guide-books say that the town is pleasant, and mention in support of their epithet its "iron-works and distilleries." A pilgrim in Ruskin's footsteps will turn rather to ascend Mont Rivel. The walk takes no more than an hour, even if you stop to pick gentians by the way, and the view is magnificent—commanding, as Miss Betham-Edwards describes it, "on one side the verdant valley of the Ain, the river flowing gently through green fields and softly dimpled hills ; on another, Andelot with its bridge and the lofty rocks bristling round Salins ; on the third side, the road leading to Pontarlier amid pine forest and limestone crags ; and above this a sight more majestic still, namely, the vast parallel ranges of the Jura, deepest purple, crested in the far-away distance with the silvery peak of Mont Blanc." <sup>1</sup>

Champagnole is now easily accessible by railway. The direct line from Dijon to Pontarlier and Lausanne passes Andelot, and thence a branch line has been made to Champagnole, St. Laurent and Morez. Every reader of *Præterita* knows the latter places as further stages upon Ruskin's old road to the Alps. One or other of them was an easy day's journey from Champagnole. "To any person who has all his senses about him," he says in *Modern Painters*, "a quiet walk along not more than ten or twelve miles of road a day, is the most amusing of all travelling ;" and when once the carriage reached the slopes of the Jura, Ruskin walked more than he drove. He counted the stages by the prevailing flowers. It was at St. Laurent that the first lilies of the valley were to be found, and at Morez the gentians. The next was the day of days—that which took the travellers, still by the old carriage-road from Paris, over the crest of Jura and unfolded before their eyes—

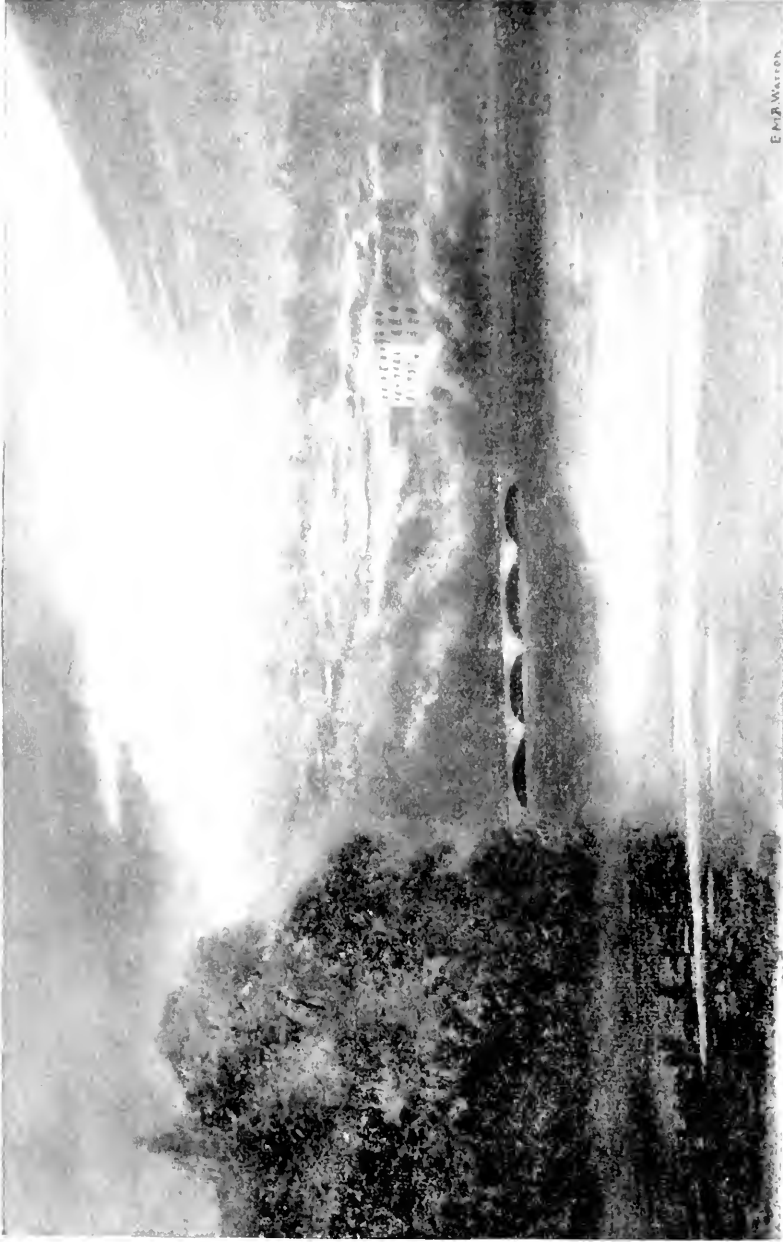
<sup>1</sup> *Holidays in Eastern France*, p. 249.

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from the Col de la Faucille—the whole lake of Geneva, with Mont Blanc and the chain of the Alps along a hundred miles of horizon.

The topographical features which give its supremacy to this view are well explained by the best of all Swiss guides, Mr. Ball : “ The range of the Jura, extending from the Mont Colombier, near Culoz, to Soleure, forms a natural terrace from whence to survey the Swiss and Savoy Alps. One who ascends to a height of 3000 or 4000 feet anywhere in the range, overlooks the intermediate country, and takes in some considerable portion of the great girdle of snowy peaks that encloses the basin of the Rhone. The effect of this panorama is immeasurably increased when a broad expanse of water lies in the space between the eye and the distant background ; and hence it happens that the finest views from the Jura are those obtained from the parts of the range near the west end of the Lake of Geneva, or from above Neufchâtel. The latter position is the more central, being about equidistant from the highest peaks of the Savoy and of the Bernese Alps. The Jura above Geneva is much nearer to Mont Blanc than to the Bernese chain, the former being about sixty miles distant, and the panorama, though more striking towards the S.W., is less complete ; but the Lake Lemman, extending from the spectator’s feet for a distance of forty miles, with its broad channel gradually contracted between heights which rise higher and higher on either hand until they merge in the background of snowy peaks, is an object which, when seen under favourable circumstances, can never be forgotten. To enjoy this view it is not necessary to reach the higher summits of the Jura, which surpass by some 1200 feet, the general level of the range. It may be obtained from the Col de la Faucille, or rather less perfectly from the road which was at a later period preferred by Nyon and St. Cergues.” Unfortunately it is seldom that circumstances are favourable ; and Ruskin, who





E. H. Warren.

GENEVA. FROM THE QUAI DES BERGUES



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knew both roads, has to admit that he never saw the view perfectly but once—namely, in 1835. This is not surprising, for it is only on one day in six that Mont Blanc is visible from Geneva.

The Col de la Faucille is now a favourite resort, with a Grand Hotel, and, I believe, a season of winter sports. The railway stops at present at Morez ; but on the other side, from Geneva, there is a steam-tramway to Gex, at the foot of the Jura, whence it is a walk of two hours to the Col. The place has associations with another lover of landscape than Ruskin. It was at La Faucille that Théodore Rousseau spent some months in 1834—the year before that of Ruskin's first visit—and studied, as his biographer relates, " the great chain of the Alps dominated by Mont Blanc, under all conditions of atmosphere, clear and calm under the blue sky, or overcast under the vapours that rise from Lake Lemman, or fresh and faultless in the morning before the rising sun." It was from the Faucille that he painted his *View of the Chain of Mont Blanc in a Storm* : " The Alps had veiled their heads under the immense black cloud ; the thunder roared ; the lightning fitfully revealed beyond the gloomy shroud and mist Mont Blanc, august and calm beneath the insults of the elements." It is interesting to compare Rousseau's picture on canvas with Ruskin's word-painting. Each was a lover of nature, and to each a vision was opened on the Col de la Faucille, and each knew the spot under all conditions of weather. But the eye sees what it brings the capacity of seeing. To Théodore Rousseau the chosen vision was of storm and cloud ; to Ruskin, of " infinitude of sapphire lake," of " all that rose against and melted into the sky, of mountain and mountain snow," of " that living plain, burning with human gladness, studded with white homes—a milky way of star-dwellings cast across its sunlit blue."

## CHAPTER VI

### SWITZERLAND

"The best image which the world can give of Paradise is in the slope of the meadows, orchards and corn-fields on the sides of a great Alp, with its purple rocks and eternal snows above."—RUSKIN (*Modern Painters*).

SINCE first he took the road to the Alps, Ruskin, as I have said, accounted any year ill-spent or unfortunate which did not bring him to Switzerland or Savoy. It were tedious to give the dates of his several visits. It will suffice to say that in twenty-six different years of his life he was for a longer or shorter time among the Alps. Generally it was for a longer time, for he was bound by no school terms, office leave, or other fixed limits ; and few Englishmen can have known the Alpine region better than he. The Eastern Alps, indeed, he hardly visited ; but with most parts of the Central and Western districts, he was familiar by frequent travels. He was not a high mountaineer, but in his younger days he was an active walker among the lower snows. He knew Switzerland in winter, too, as well as in summer ; and in all seasons alike, he had more interests and more incitements to close observation, than most people are fortunate enough to possess. He was early in the field as an Alpine photographer, and was proud of having taken the first sun-portrait of the Matterhorn. He was an indefatigable sketcher, and his Alpine sketches were most carefully done. Mr. Mathews, in his *Annals of Mont Blanc*, calls special attention to the beauty of the drawing (in *Modern Painters*) of the Montagne de la Côte—the ridge which separates the glaciers of Bossons and Tacconay. I doubt if Ruskin ever

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made a "word-painting" of anything in Switzerland which he had not also painted with the brush. Of the range of Mont Blanc alone my catalogue of his drawings counts a hundred pieces. He was also botanist, geologist, mineralogist; and many of his visits to Switzerland were primarily directed to one or other of those pursuits. Other tours were made with the special object of following Turner's footsteps, identifying the master's sketches, comparing them with the reality, and thus deducing the principles of "Turnerian topography." A disciple who in his turn would follow Ruskin's footsteps in Switzerland will have to wander widely and observe closely.

Ruskin says in one of his letters that he could, if he chose, write a descriptive book about Switzerland which the public would buy willingly enough. He never wrote it; he turned to political economy instead. And yet he had written it already, for how much of *Modern Painters*, and especially of the later volumes, is founded upon Swiss travel! how many are the Swiss scenes that he describes in it! A mere glance at the list of plates in the fourth volume illustrates the point—"The Pass of Faido," "The Towers of Fribourg," "The Cervin," "The Mountains of Villeneuve," "The Buttresses of an Alp." The pages devoted to Chamonix and Zermatt are the most consecutive, for it was from those places that he drew his principal illustrations of mountain-beauty; and the chapters in which he did this may be said to mark a stage in the history of Swiss travel. "I owe him a personal debt," wrote Sir Leslie Stephen; "many people had tried their hands upon Alpine descriptions since Saussure; but Ruskin's chapters seemed to have the freshness of a new revelation. His power of seeing the phenomena vividly was as remarkable as his power, not always shared by scientific writers, of making description interesting. The fourth volume of *Modern Painters*

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

infected me and other early members of the Alpine Club with an enthusiasm for which, I hope, we are still grateful." And Ruskin treated of the lowlands only less copiously than of the highlands ; maintaining among other things the proposition which Leslie Stephen combated, that the best views may be had lowest down. " The passage of the Jura by Olten (between Bâle and Lucerne)," he wrote, " which is by the modern tourist triumphantly effected through a tunnel in ten minutes, between two piggish trumpet grunts proclamatory of the ecstatic transit, used to show from every turn and sweep of its winding ascent, up which one sauntered, gathering wild flowers, for half a happy day, diviner aspects of the distant Alps than ever were achieved by toil of limb or won by risk of life." Scattered up and down in *Modern Painters* and other books are descriptions (to name a few instances only) of the shores of Lucerne and Geneva, of Bâle, of Schaffhausen, of Martigny and Sion, of the country between Berne and Fribourg. And then, again, few writers have devoted so many pages as Ruskin to the description of the flowers and trees of Switzerland. His passage on the pine is famous ; but here is a piece of Swiss foreground not so well known perhaps as most of his other Swiss descriptions : " The moss arabesques of violet and silver ; the delicate springing of the myrtle leaves along the clefts of shade, and blue bloom of their half-seen fruit ; the rosy flashes of rhododendron-flame from among the pine roots, and their crests of crimson, sharp against the deep Alpine air, from the ridges of grey rock ; the gentian's peace of pale, ineffable azure, as if strange stars had been made for earth out of the blue light of heaven ; the soft spaces of mountain grass, for ever young, over which the morning dew is dashed so deep that it looks, under the first long sun rays, like a white veil falling folded upon the hills ; wreathing itself soon away into silvery tresses of cloud, braided



THE TOWERS OF FRIBOURG





## SWITZERLAND

in and out among the pines, and leaving all the fair glades and hillocks warm with the pale green glow of grassy life, and whispering with lapse of everlasting springs. Infinite tenderness mingled with this infinite power, and the far-away summits, alternate pearl and purple, ruling it with their stainless rest.”<sup>1</sup> And then, once more, how numerous are the passages in which Ruskin touches on the human interest in Swiss travel! To the subject of Swiss châteaux he had given several chapters in his early *Poetry of Architecture*, and he often returned to it incidentally. He notices, too, the way-side chapels with some fresco of the Madonna standing “with her hands folded, and the moon above her feet, and the companies of heaven around her, crown above crown, circlet beyond circlet, gleaming golden in the arched shade;” or the girl-threshers on a lowland farm, in snow-white shirt and chemisette; or the shepherds on the high Alps at their hour of evening devotion, “passing on the voice of worship from hill to hill;” or the laden peasant on the mountain side: “To glean their meadows side by side, so happier; to bear the burden up the breathless mountain flank, un murmuringly; to bid the stranger drink from their vessel of milk; to see at the foot of their low deathbeds a pale figure upon a cross, dying, also patiently;—in this they are different from the cattle and from the stones, but in all this unrewarded as far as concerns the present life.”

And once more, Ruskin’s writings throw much sidelight on another aspect of Swiss travel. There is no prospect, as we all know, which is not improved by the presence of a good inn; and Ruskin, as I have remarked in my Preface, was an habitué and a shrewd judge of inns. He liked his creature-comforts, as I have said, but he hated “Grand Hotels.” “I have lived,” he said in one of his later Oxford lectures, “in marble palaces, and under

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on the Turner Gallery*, 1856 (Library Edition, vol. xiii. p. 117).

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

frescoed loggie, but have never been so comfortable in either as in the clean room of an old Swiss inn, whose walls and floor were of plain deal." Mr. Coolidge, who has treated of Swiss inns<sup>1</sup> with the same minuteness that he elsewhere brings to bear on First Ascents or Cantonal institutions, has missed some data for this branch of history which he might have found in Ruskin. He might, for instance, have supplemented his historical references to "the decent little mountain inn," first opened at Zermatt by Dr. Lauber, the village doctor, in 1839, by Ruskin's account of the accommodation as he found it in 1844. The uncomplimentary references to the original inn at Macugnaga collected by Mr. Coolidge might be tempered by Ruskin's detailed description in *Præterita* of the place as it was in 1845. The guide-books of the time are very severe upon the place; but Ruskin, like Forbes before him, seems to have found it tolerable enough, though Ruskin to be sure had Couttet, as well as a personal servant, with him, and Couttet was something of a culinary expert. A guide who can lend a hand in the kitchen makes a wonderful difference; as most travellers in out-of-the-way places well know; and if any of my readers know it not, he may learn it from the admirable resourcefulness of the guides as chronicled in what to my taste is the pleasantest of all books of Alpine travel—the late Mr. S. W. King's *Italian Valleys of the Pennine Alps*. Couttet's triumphs in this sort, as described in some of Ruskin's letters, were as great as those of Mr. King's Delapierre. Ruskin's references to some other inns—as those at the Giessbach, at Chamonix and at St. Martin—will be mentioned on later pages. He often gives in his letters particulars of inn-charges, and these are somewhat tantalising to travellers in the present more expensive days. Thus at Airolo Ruskin and guide and servant fared sumptuously for seven

<sup>1</sup> In his *Swiss Travel and Swiss Guide-books*.

## SWITZERLAND

francs a day. Couttet himself received four francs a day, Ruskin paying for his board and lodging.

Of a traveller, so familiar with Switzerland as Ruskin, and so sensitive of beauty, the question may well be asked: What was his favourite view? "It is a great weakness, not to say worse than weakness on the part of travellers," he somewhere says, "to extol always chiefly what they think fewest people have seen or can see." I do not know that Ruskin, who visited few, if any, remote or inaccessible places, was much exposed to this temptation, but at any rate he resisted it. He extolled chiefly, as we shall hear, familiar scenes. Other travellers indulge the weakness of making a mystery of their loves—as he who brought to Browning and his friends—

"News of that rare nook,  
Yet untroubled by the tourist, touched on by no travel-book . . .  
Go and see and vouch for certain, then come back and never tell  
Living soul but us."

Ruskin's first desire whenever he had discovered anything beautiful was to make all the world share it with him. What, then, was his favourite haunt, or rather the spot which he most admired, in the Alps? "I have climbed much, and wandered much, in the heart of the high Alps," he wrote in *Modern Painters*, "but I have never yet seen anything which equalled the view from the cabin of the Montanvert." James Forbes, who had climbed higher and wandered yet more widely, quoted Ruskin's verdict with "much sympathy"; though it may be inferred from the passage in which he does so<sup>1</sup> that his own mind was divided between the Montanvert and the Wengern Alp. And perhaps Ruskin would not have greatly differed; for elsewhere<sup>2</sup> he says: "The most

<sup>1</sup> "Pedestrianism in Switzerland," p. 472, in Mr. Coolidge's edition of Forbes's *Travels through the Alps*.

<sup>2</sup> *Præterita*, iii. § 54.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

beautiful mountain in Switzerland, and as far as I can read, or learn, the most beautiful in the world, is the Jungfrau of Lauterbrunnen." He calls it "of Lauterbrunnen," because his favourite view of the mountain was from the valley called by the name of that village. "The view of the Jungfrau from the Castle of Manfred is," he says in *Deucalion*, "probably the most beautiful natural vision in Europe." This is the subject of our artist's drawing (Plate XIII). The ruined castle of the Barons of Unspunnen (two miles from Interlaken on one of the roads to Lauterbrunnen), shown in the foreground, is the reputed residence of Manfred, and its position well accords with the descriptions in the poem. In his diary Byron says of the road from Interlaken that he "entered upon a range of scenes beyond all description or previous conception." Another great poet was of much the same opinion. "One of the stateliest bits of landskip I ever saw," wrote Tennyson in 1846, "was a look down on the valley of Lauterbrunnen while we were descending from the Wengern Alp." His Alpine idyl was, he considered, in some respects his "most successful work":—

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height :  
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang),  
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?  
But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease  
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,  
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire ;  
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,  
For Love is of the valley, come thou down  
And find him ; by the happy threshold, he,  
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,  
Or red with spirted purple in the vats,  
Or foxlike in the vine ; nor cares to walk  
With Death and Morning on the silver horns,  
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,  
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice. . . .



THE JUNGFRAU, FROM THE CASTLE OF MANFRED







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Ruskin greatly loved the idyl: "one of the most wonderful pieces of sight in all poetry," he called it. Tennyson wrote it at Lauterbrunnen, in sight of the Silberhorn. Leslie Stephen agreed with Ruskin in awarding the palm of beauty to the Jungfrau, but to the Jungfrau as seen from the Wengern Alp, which (says Stephen) "must be precisely the loveliest place in the world." And again elsewhere, in his paper entitled "The Regrets of a Mountaineer," he stands "at the foot of what, to my mind, is the most glorious of all Alpine wonders—the huge Oberland precipice, on the slopes of the Faulhorn or the Wengern Alp." Next in beauty to the Jungfrau Ruskin placed "the double peaks of the Wetterhorn and Wellhorn": our drawing (Plate XIV) shows the Wetterhorn as seen from Burglauenen near Grindelwald. The third place Ruskin gave to the Aiguille de Bionnassay, the buttress of Mont Blanc on the south-west, which again in another place he calls "the most graceful buttress ridge in all the Alps."

Ruskin, it will be seen from what has already been said, had many haunts in Switzerland; but of homes, comparatively few. With his "homes" in Savoy I deal in later chapters (ix and x). In Switzerland, Vevey became, he says, "the most domestic of all our foreign homes"—most domestic, because there his parents often stayed in earlier years while he went on to Zermatt or Chamonix, and there in later years he was increasingly content to stay with them. The neighbourhood of Vevey and Montreux is sadly altered since Ruskin first knew it, but a visitor to Vevey may still even in these days of railways and long lines of Grand Hotels walk in Ruskin's footsteps and find, to the measure of his capacity, Ruskin's enchantment. He and his parents used to stay at the Hôtel des Trois Couronnes; a house which, though much enlarged, occupies the same position and commands the same view as in Ruskin's time. His favourite walks are hardly spoilt; though,

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

to be sure, the temptation to shirk some of the walking is great owing to the "Chemins de Fer Electriques Veveysans" — "accursed," I suppose, but surely the least obtrusive and least offensive of accursed things. They help you up the duller part of the road, and for the rest you may ramble all day without ear, eye or scent being conscious of their presence. Ruskin was especially fond of the walk from Vevey to the Castle of Blonay, and often extended it to the ascent of the Pleiades. The Castle is unspoilt (except for the substitution of slates for tiles in some of the roofs), and the beautiful description of it in *Præterita* still answers to the reality. There are few lovelier walks in Switzerland than those which may be taken in spring or early summer on the hillsides above Vevey. "Go out, in the spring-time," wrote Ruskin, "among the meadows that slope from the shores of the Swiss lakes to the roots of their lower mountains. There, mingled with the taller gentians and the white narcissus, the grass grows deep and free; and as you follow the winding mountain paths, beneath arching boughs all veiled and dim with blossom—paths that for ever droop and rise over the green banks and mounds sweeping down in scented undulation, steep to the blue water, studded here and there with new-mown heaps, filling all the air with fainter sweetness—look up towards the higher hills, where the waves of everlasting green roll silently into their long inlets among the shadows of the pines; and we may, perhaps, at last know the meaning of those quiet words of the 147th Psalm, *He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.*" It was at Vevey in early June 1849 that Ruskin had the first thought of this famous and beautiful passage, and in the catalogue of his examples in the Drawing School at Oxford he called the pheasant-eyed narcissus "the Vevey narcissus, because it grows brightest in the fields under the Dent de Jaman." The wild lilies were another of his favourite



THE WETTERHORN





## SWITZERLAND

flowers at Vevey. "Remember," he says in *The Stones of Venice*, "that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless; peacocks and lilies for instance; at least I suppose this quill I hold in my hand writes better than a peacock's would, and the peasants of Vevey, whose fields in spring-time are as white with lilies, as the Dent du Midi is with its snow, told me that the hay was none the better for them." One has to go a little further afield in these days to find such narcissus meads as Ruskin describes, and I do not think that "the fragrance of the meadows of Clarens," of which he speaks elsewhere, can now be caught. The shore of the lake from Vevey to Villeneuve is an almost uninterrupted range of hotels, pensions, villas and bazaars; but the upper slopes are as flowery as in Ruskin's time. I think I never quite knew the meaning of his words "the grass grows deep and free," and I had sometimes suspected his accounts of the narcissus fields of exaggeration, until the other day, also in early June, when I went up from Vevey to Les Avants. There the mountain slopes are powdered white as snow with the narcissus and the mild air is heavy with their scent, whilst in the richer meadows high grasses crown and shade the flowers. Ruskin's words are as true as they are beautiful. Elsewhere, among "the principal gifts of the northern earth," he names "the wreaths of apple blossom, in the Vevey orchards, with the far-off blue of the lake of Geneva seen between the flowers." This is the effect which our artist has chosen in her drawing of the Castle of Blonay (Plate XV).

Another Swiss haunt, which may also in a sense be called a home of Ruskin's, is the Giessbach. Every tourist in Switzerland knows the famous Falls on the Lake of Brienz; and even in these days of a funicular railway—and a huge "hydro" they deserve their popularity, for though by no means the grandest, they are perhaps

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

the prettiest of waterfalls. Like many other favourite haunts in Switzerland, the Giessbach was first opened up to tourists by a local schoolmaster. His name was Kehrli, and a not very remote edition of Murray says that good specimens of Swiss carving may be purchased of his descendants. He and his family were famous at an earlier date for another art. Mr. Coolidge in his history of Swiss inns mentions Kehrli and his family as "the best choristers of native airs in Switzerland." This was the opinion also of Ruskin's father, who in his diary for 1833 wrote that the best thing about the Giessbach was "the Swiss family in the small inn up the hill opposite to the fall. The old man, his son, and two daughters, sung Swiss songs in the sweetest and most affecting manner, infinitely finer than opera singing." The small inn had been opened by Kehrli in 1833. Ruskin did not revisit the place till 1866, by which time the original inn had been replaced by a larger one under different management. With the new landlord's family, he made great friends; and "Marie of the Giessbach" and her sister are often referred to in his letters in terms of affectionate remembrance. He was delighted with the beauty of the place, even condoning the illumination of the Falls, and he revisited it in several later years. Letters describing the beauty of the falls and the views of the lake may be read in the Library Edition,<sup>1</sup> and references to the flowers and other things that interested him there occur in his later books.<sup>2</sup> One of the unwritten chapters of his Autobiography was to have been called "The Rainbows of the Giessbach."

Another place where Ruskin spent much time and which he greatly liked is Bellinzona. He was attracted to it in the first instance by Turner's sketches. Everyone who is familiar with

<sup>1</sup> Vol. xviii. pp. xl.-xliii. vol. xix. p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Proserpina*, vol. xxv. p. 316, and *Eagle's Nest*, § 101.





THE CASTLE OF BLONAY AND LAKE OF GENEVA





## SWITZERLAND

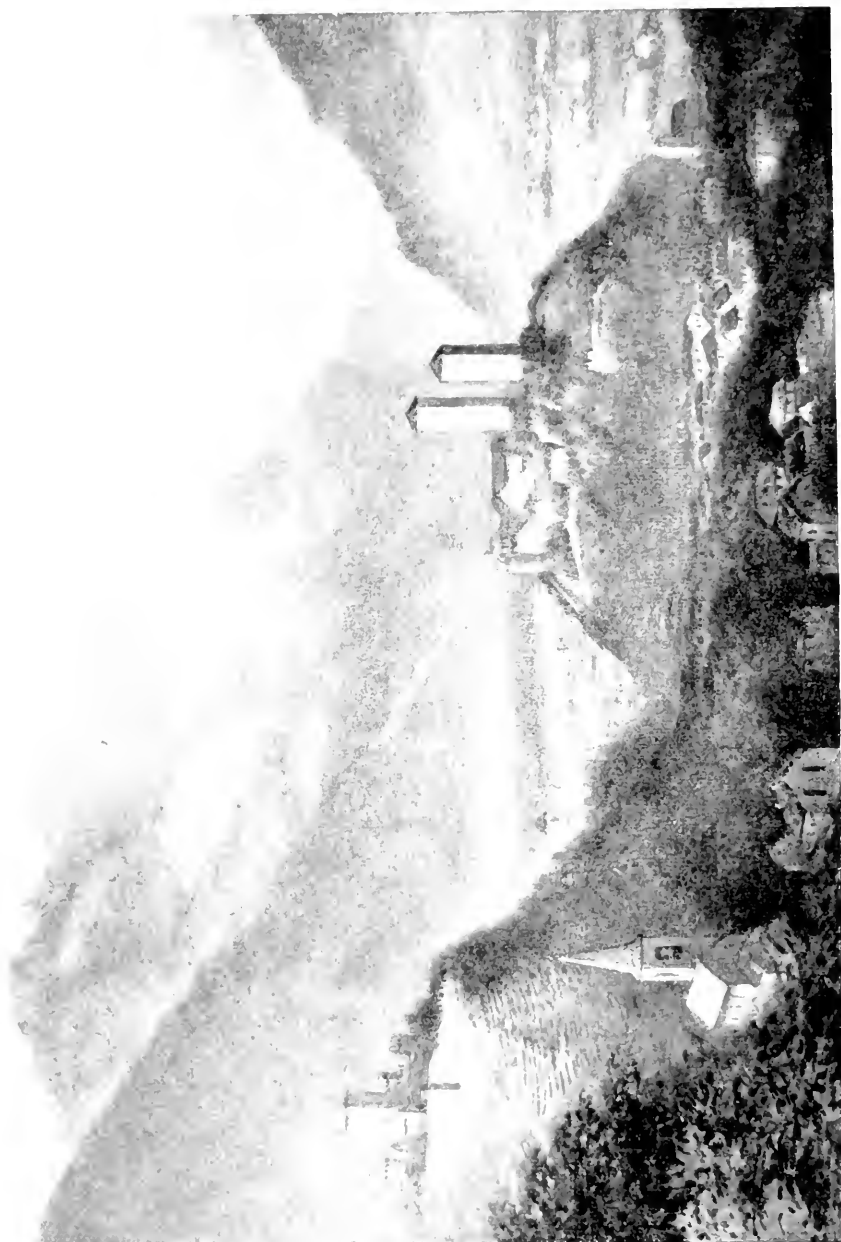
the collection now distributed between the National Gallery and the Tate Gallery knows how fond Turner was of the place, and from how many different points of view he sketched it. "The town of Bellinzona," wrote Ruskin in his first Catalogue of the Sketches, "is, on the whole, the most picturesque in Switzerland, being crowned by three fortresses, standing on isolated rocks of noble form, while the buildings are full of beautiful Italian character." That was written in 1857. Having finished his examination of the Turner Bequest, Ruskin went in the following year to Switzerland to identify several of the drawings more surely, and on this occasion he spent some weeks at Bellinzona. His delight in the scenery is told in his letters, and found expression also in many drawings. His study of the iron-work is shown both in the text and (in the first edition) in the illustrations of *The Two Paths*. "The most interesting pieces of iron-work," he there says, "though by no means the purest in style, are to be found in out-of-the-way provincial towns, where people do not care, or are unable, to make polite alterations. The little town of Bellinzona, for instance, on the south of the Alps, and that of Sion on the north, have both of them complete schools of iron-work in their balconies and vineyard gates. That of Bellinzona is the best, though not very old—I suppose most of it of the seventeenth century; still it is very quaint and beautiful." And he goes on to illustrate the style, deducing from his examples various principles of the right treatment of ornament in iron. I have not been in Bellinzona for a long time, and the coming of the railway has doubtless much altered the place; but some years ago many examples of the school of iron-work admired by Ruskin could still be seen there.

Bellinzona, as everyone knows, is at the foot of the St. Gothard route, and Ruskin, at one time or another, spent many days in

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

tracing Turner's sketching rambles from Airolo to Locarno. "I would like," says Sir Charles Holroyd, the Director of the National Gallery, "to see every one of Turner's nineteen thousand water-colour sketches and lead-pencil drawings reproduced, so that we could all hold them in our hands and carry them about with us; for in them there is an unfailing beauty of composition, and a glorious truth of effect and of detail, by which Turner managed to make complete pictures out of even the fewest touches. No one realises Turner's full genius till he studies these drawings. They teach us to look at nature with a new and seeing eye."<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles goes on to describe in a very interesting way some of his own sketching rambles in Turner's footsteps, in Yorkshire and in Venice; noting that "often and often he had been able to see the meaning of what appears a careless scratch or even an accidental wriggle, only when the actual scene was before him." This was the kind of study to which Ruskin devoted many of his days in Switzerland; often taking with him, not reproductions of Turner's work, but the actual sketches or drawings from his own rich collection of the master's water-colours. Upon Turner's "Pass of Faido" in particular he spent infinite pains. This is one of the two drawings of which he said in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters*, "all my half-volume is abstracted" in them. Ruskin accordingly spent many days on successive visits to Switzerland in comparing Turner's sketch and subsequent drawing with the actual scene; noting the master's essential truth and yet topographical licence; and fixing his comparisons by numerous sketches of his own. He etched a topographical outline of the scene; he etched a portion of Turner's drawing to illustrate the master's truth of rocks ("Crests of the Slaty Crystallines"), tracing also the leading lines in that portion of the work. He

<sup>1</sup> *Studio* Extra Number on "The Water-colours of Turner," 1909.







## SWITZERLAND

etched a reduced outline of the whole drawing. He drew for the engravers a portion of the torrent-bed ("Rocks in Unrest"). And he copied the central portion of the drawing and had it engraved for a frontispiece ("The Gates of the Hills"). These particulars<sup>1</sup> illustrate not only Ruskin's industry and his study of Turner but also, what is here the point, the manner in which many of his Swiss days were spent.

In the year of Ruskin's principal sojourn at Bellinzona he spent some time also at Rheinfelden; engaged there on the same kind of work as at Faido in earlier years. The results of his work at Rheinfelden are contained in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*: in "The nets in the Rapids" (two engravings of sketches by Turner of the old bridge), in Ruskin's own drawing of "The Bridge of Rheinfelden," showing it with topographical accuracy, and lastly, in his drawing of the towers and walls and moat, which he called "Peace." "You may, I hope," he wrote, "still see the subject of the plate; the old bridge over the moat, and older wall and towers; the stork's nest on the top of the nearest one; the moat itself, now nearly filled with softest grass and flowers; a little mountain brook rippling through down the midst of them, and the first wooded promontory of the Jura beyond. Had Rheinfelden been a place of the least mark, instead of an early ruinous village, it is just this spot of ground which, costing little or nothing, would have been made its railroad station, and its refreshment-room would have been built out of the stones of its towers." It has not quite come to that; though, since Ruskin wrote, Rheinfelden has grown into a place of some commercial mark. It has salt-works, breweries, and factories; and the growth of the town has led, as usual, to the destruction of most of the old walls; but the Stork's Tower has been spared,

<sup>1</sup> Further details may be found in my Introduction to vol. vi. of the Library Edition.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

and birds still nest there. The old bridge was for the most part destroyed by fire some few years ago, and the drawings of Turner and Ruskin are now of things of the past. The principal hotel contains, however, a record of Ruskin. If you go to the "Grand Hôtel des Salines," and make friends, you will be shown a drawing of the old bridge done by Ruskin and given by him to the landlord's mother.

But it is Lucerne which, in actual length of continuous sojourn, has the best claim to be called Ruskin's Swiss haunt or home. The town and the lake were familiar to him from boyhood, and every feature of them became more vividly impressed upon his mind from association with Turner's work. In his earliest Catalogue of the Turner Sketches, Ruskin arranged a hundred of them so as to illustrate a supposed tour by the artist and to suggest the probable circumstances in which the several pieces might have been made. There is no pleasanter or more instructive way of looking at the sketches than to follow some series of them topographically with the aid of Ruskin's Catalogue. I take some of the Lucerne sketches here in this way, in order to illustrate Ruskin's own sojourn in the town and on the lake. I attach consecutive numbers to the sketches which he describes, and in a footnote identify them, so far as is possible, with the numbers in the National Collection.<sup>1</sup>

"Arriving at Lucerne, we immediately climb the hill above the Reuss to try if we can see the Alps. (1) No Alps to be seen, the day being grey and misty and disagreeably hot besides. The

<sup>1</sup> No. (1) is No. 288 in the National collection; (2) is ccclxiv. (386) in the Inventory; (3) is No. 290; (4) I have not been able to identify; (5) is No. 98; (6) is No. 97; (7) is No. 47 in the selection lent to the Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford; (8) is No. 43 in the National collection; (9) is No. 96; (10) is No. 34 in the Fourth Loan Collection (in circulation among provincial galleries); (11) is ccclxiv. (387) in the Inventory; (12) is No. 45; (13) is No. 768; (14) is No. 99; and (15) is No. 773.



RHEINFELDEN



## SWITZERLAND

form of the Rigi is, however, dimly visible beyond the first branch of the lake ; and the old town delights us, especially the wall and towers bent like a bow over the hill behind it, which defended it in the old times of Austrian spears from any attack on the land side. (2) After dinner we take a boat, and begin sketching the town from the water. The weather clears gradually, and as we watch the mountains come one by one out of the haze, we are much diverted from our work, and draw the town but carelessly. (3) The evening gets so beautiful that we give up our sketch of the town, and row out into the lake ; Mont Pilate glowing in ruby red, as the sun sets. Wonderfully beautiful. The perspective of the right-hand shore, which gives distance and magnitude to the Mont Pilate, the use of the oblique line of the boat to keep the eye from resting on the formal oblong of the lake boundaries, and the long reflections of the fragment of blue cloud are all intensely Turneresque. (4) Having set out for an excursion among the hills, we sleep at Brunnen, and are sorry to find, next morning, on walking down to the quay, that bad weather is coming on ; the lake looking very hazy, and mischievous clouds forming under the Rothstok on the right hand. (5) The bad weather comes on ; but we persist in our excursion ; and after getting very wet at Schwytz, are rewarded by seeing the clouds break as we reach the ridge of Goldau, and reveal the Lake of Zug under a golden sky. (6) We sleep at Arth, and are up, and out on the lake, early in the morning ; to good purpose. The sun rises behind the Mythens, and we see such an effect of lake and light, as we shall not forget soon. (7) We breakfast at Kussnacht, and afterwards go fishing on the Lake of Lucerne. The village, seen from the boat, presents this pleasant aspect ; the clouds of last night melting away gradually from the hills. (8) The evening is quite cloudless and very lovely ; the air clear, owing

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

to the past storms. We much enjoy a walk on the Lucerne shore, Mont Pilate showing blue in the distance. Three large boats rowing from Lucerne show as dark spots on the golden lake. The cows, finding the flies troublesome, stand deep in the water. Most instructive : the connection of the two dark banks by the boats giving continuity and quietness to the composition ; the red cows completing its glow, and by their spottiness preventing the eye from dwelling too much on the three spots of boats. Beyond Mont Pilate is the opening to the Lake of Lungern and Bernese Alps, indicated by the white light in the distance. (9) The Rigi, seen from the windows of his inn, La Cygne, in the dawn of a lovely summer's morning ; a fragment of fantastic mist hanging between us and the hill. (10) We arrive at Brunnen early in the morning, and see the two Mythens above Schwytz, in clear weather this time. Very elaborate and beautiful, the dark slope of the hills on the right especially. Note the value of the little violet touch of light behind their central darkest ridge. (11) The upper reach of the lake, looking towards Tell's chapel, from the hill above Brunnen. The delicate, light, and sharply-drawn clouds of this sketch are peculiarly beautiful. (12) The same view as No. 9, by evening instead of morning light. I cannot tell why Turner was so fond of the Mont Rigi, but there are seven or eight more studies of it among his sketches of this period. (13) We bid farewell to Lucerne as the morning reddens Mont Pilate ; hardly anything of the lake visible ; and it is so early that no one is stirring except just above the boats. A blotted and careless drawing, but so pretty in subject as to be worth including in the series. There is body-colour white, touched in the mist beyond the lake, and over the second tower. This is very rare in Turner's water-colour sketches. I believe the second tower was meant to be the first, and when he put the



LUCERNE: MOONLIGHT





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other in farther to the left, he could not make up his mind to part with the first one. (14) We sleep at Fluelen ; and going out for our usual walk before breakfast, find the effect of morning mist on the lake quite enchanting. The blue touches in the foreground indicate the course of the river to the lake, through its marshy delta. The massy square building is a large private house, almost a tower, and perhaps in the shell of its walls ancient ; but Turner has much exaggerated its elevation. The subject was one very dear to Turner, he having made one of his earliest and loveliest drawings (of great size also), for Mr. Fawkes of Farnley, from this very shore. (15) The lake from Fluelen. Just when we are going to start for St. Gothard, we find that the misty morning has broken into a cloudy day, and that assuredly it is soon going to rain. We are much discomposed at this aspect of affairs, as seen from our inn window, but make a hasty blot of it, nevertheless, as the diligence horses are putting to ; and the blot is a grand one." And then Ruskin goes on to follow Turner's footsteps on this imaginary sketching-tour across the St. Gothard, whither we need not proceed.

Ruskin's conjectures as to the methods and occasions of the several sketches may be wrong or right, and even if wrong are interesting ; but in any case the descriptions bring home to one, as nothing else could do so clearly, his own close study both of Turner's handiwork and of the scenes which the artist portrayed. Ruskin knew every corner of the lake ; he was fond of rowing in its more secluded bays, landing here and there to sketch, and he had walked among all its hills. His own drawings of the town, and of various scenes on the lake, are many, as may be seen from the Catalogue in the Library Edition. In his earlier, as again in his later, years his visits to Lucerne, though frequent, were not of long duration, but in 1861 he was there from the

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middle of October to the end of the year ; and those who want support for the view that the winter is the right season in which to visit Switzerland should read Ruskin's letters from Lucerne in 1861.<sup>1</sup>

The Lucerne of to-day is a very different place from the Lucerne which Turner and Ruskin knew and loved and drew. In the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* (1856), Ruskin foresaw "within the perspective of but few years, the town of Lucerne consisting of a row of symmetrical hotels round the foot of the lake, its old bridges destroyed, an iron one built over the Reuss, and an acacia promenade carried along the lake shore, with a German band playing under a Chinese temple at the end of it, and the enlightened travellers, representatives of European civilisation, performing before the Alps, in each afternoon summer sunlight, in their modern manner, the Dance of Death." Every year does something to fulfil the prophecy. Though two of the old bridges remain, the Hofbrücke had already been removed in 1852 when the shores were extended and embanked for the construction of new hotels, and the iron bridge over the Reuss was built in 1869-70. In his earlier years, Ruskin used to stay with his parents at the old "Swan" inn (then on the lake shore), and he mentions it in *Præterita* as one of the houses where he and they felt truly "at home." He reviled the building of the Schweizerhof ; but he found it comfortable, and there he stayed in 1861 and afterwards ; even discovering one view of Lucerne in which the building "came in, not disadvantageously." And much more of the old town remains than a passing tourist, content with the promenade (of chestnuts now, if I remember

<sup>1</sup> See, in the Library Edition, vol. xvii. p. xliii. and vol. xxxvi. p. 394. Wordsworth, it may be recalled, was of the same mind. In his *Guide to the English Lakes* he points out that the superiority of mountainous country is more marked in winter than in summer, owing to the greater variety of the winter colouring.



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aright, not acacias) may be aware of. And at Lucerne, as elsewhere even among the most tourist-ridden of haunts, it is easy to escape from promenades and casinos and "lions" to the seclusion of the open country. That around Lucerne, and even not much outside the circuit of its walls and towers, is very beautiful; for behind its fields, orchards and woods, the lake and mountains form ever new combinations. And it is beautiful in all seasons; not even the apple blossoms of spring are lovelier than the amber and purple of its beech woods in autumn.

Ruskin was fond, also, of the Lake of Thun. He often stayed with his parents in the "Bellevue" at Thun itself; his drawings of the town are many; and some of his latest pages (towards the end of *Præterita*) touch upon its history. His last continental tour, in 1888, took him again to the lake, and on his way home—to illness and seclusion, as it was to be—he stayed for some days in November at Merligen under the Beatenberg. "A perfect village of Swiss cottages," he called it. Some of the cottages were, however, burnt down a few years ago. Miss Warren's drawing (Plate XX) shows a piece of what of the old remains in Ruskin's latest haunt in Switzerland.

His affection for Switzerland was not, however, that alone of the sentimentalist or the lover of nature for her own sake. Professor Freeman used to be very severe upon English tourists who travel in Switzerland without realising that they are in "the very home and birthplace of freedom," and he counted it to himself greatly for righteousness that he had once been present at the *Landesgemeinden* of Uri and Appenzell. Ruskin was not, so far as I am aware, interested in any of the later developments of Swiss democracy; but of old Swiss history he was a diligent reader. One of his many unwritten books was to have been a History of the Swiss Towns. He prepared many drawings for it,

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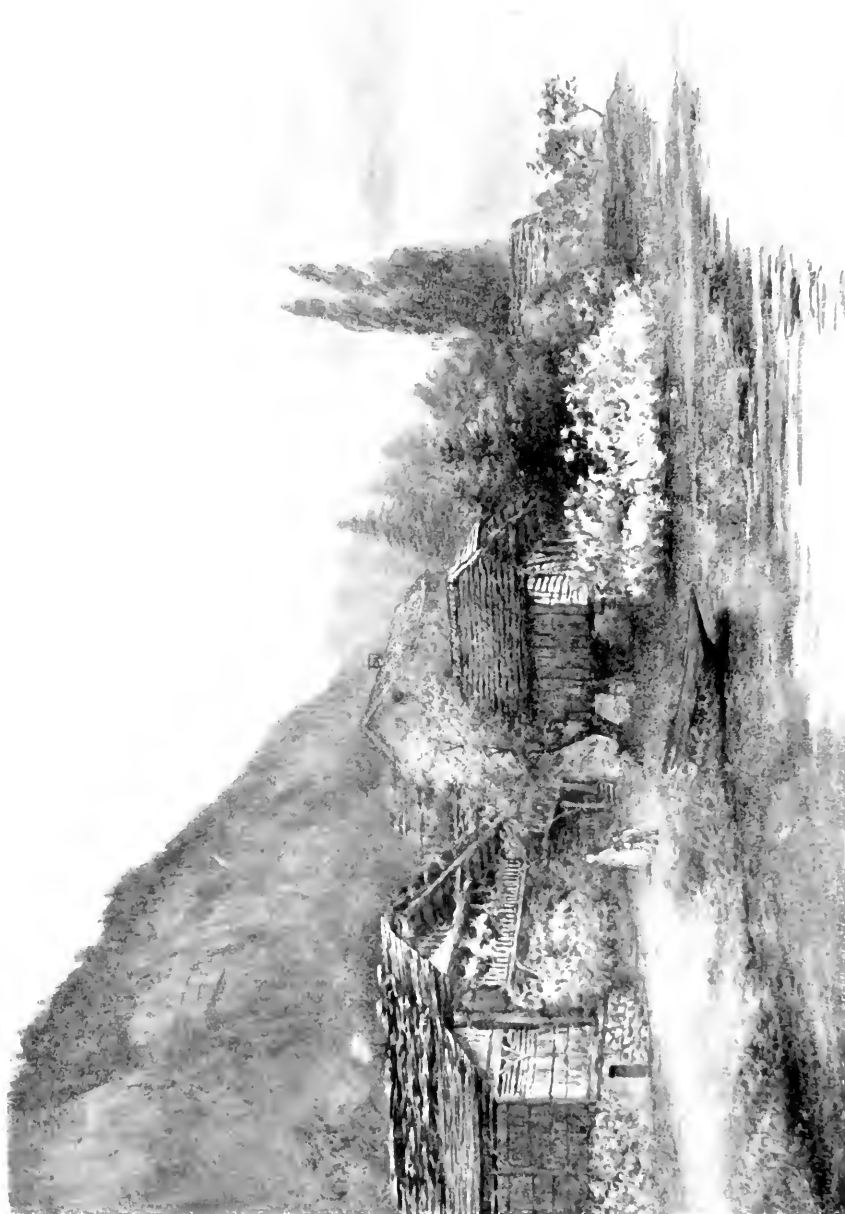
and pages of material designed for it found their way into various unexpected places—as in his *Turner Notes* of 1878, and in one of the later chapters of *Præterita*. As in Scotland his impressions of life and scenery were coloured by Sir Walter Scott, so were those of Switzerland coloured by Gotthelf. The pastoral life of Switzerland, as “the Swiss Sir Walter” describes it, was to Ruskin, he tells us, “the soul of the Alps.” In its ideal form, it was his vision of the Golden Age; it was his perception of the misery of actual conditions among the Swiss peasantry that coloured so much of “The Mountain Glory” to him with shadows of “The Mountain Gloom.” He had many schemes for ameliorating their hard lot, and was only interrupted by illness from purchasing a farm above Martigny, whereon to try his hand at establishing a pastoral Utopia. The uncomplaining fortitude of the Swiss peasants of to-day moved him no less than the splendid heroism of the old times; and one of the most beautiful of his descriptive sketches is written around the meadow of the Grütli, where three springs were said to have gushed forth from the spot when the legendary founders of Swiss freedom swore their confederate oath:

“It was not from their lakes, nor their cliffs, nor their glaciers—though these were all peculiarly their possession, that the three venerable cantons or states received their name. They were not called the States of the Rock, nor the States of the Lake, but the States of the *Forest*. And the one of the three which contains the most touching record of the spiritual power of Swiss religion, in the name of the convent of the ‘Hill of Angels,’ has, for its own, none but the sweet childish name of ‘Under the Woods.’ And indeed you may pass under them if, leaving the most sacred spot in Swiss history, the Meadow of the Three Fountains, you bid the boatman row southward a little way by the shore of the Bay of Uri. Steepest there on its western side, the walls of its rocks ascend



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to heaven. Far in the blue of evening, like a great cathedral pavement, lies the lake in its darkness ; and you may hear the whisper of innumerable falling waters return from the hollows of the cliff, like the voices of a multitude praying under their breath. From time to time the beat of a wave, slow lifted, where the rocks lean over the black depth, dies heavily as the last note of a requiem. Opposite, green with steep grass, and set with ch  let villages, the Frohnalp rises in one solemn glow of pastoral light and peace ; and above, against the clouds of twilight, ghostly on the grey precipice, stand, myriad by myriad, the shadowy armies of the Unterwalden pine. I have seen that it is possible for the stranger to pass through this great chapel, with its font of waters, and mountain pillars, and vaults of clouds, without being touched by one noble thought, or stirred by any sacred passion ; but for those who received from its waves the baptism of their youth, and learned beneath its rocks the fidelity of their manhood, and watched amidst its clouds the likeness of the dream of life, with the eyes of age—for these I will not believe that the mountain shrine was built, or the calm of its forest-shadows guarded by their God, in vain.”

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PLEASANT LAND OF FRANCE

"The nation which gave us Charlemagne, St. Louis, St. Bernard and Joan of Arc ; which founded the central type of chivalry in the myth of Roland ; which showed the utmost height of valour yet recorded in history, in the literal life of Guiscard ; and which built Chartres Cathedral."—RUSKIN, *Fors Clavigera*.

EVERY cultivated Englishman, it has been said, has a second country, and with many this is Italy. Ruskin too loved Italy, but he loved Switzerland and Savoy and France in some ways, I think, even more. He knew the French language and could speak it passably ; the architecture and the illumination of France in the Middle Ages were very dear to him ; from France, as he often said, could lessons best be learnt in chivalry and in the graces of civilised life. Though he was fond of Paris, where he had several friends, he wrote many bitter things about the life of that city ; it was the country life of France that most attracted him. "In my constant natural temper," he said, "and thoughts of things and of people I have most sympathy with Marmontel." He translated in one of the numbers of *Fors Clavigera* some pages from the *Mémoires* in which Marmontel describes his native place and the manner of his early life. One may gather from all this that what appealed to Ruskin was the aspect of French life, manners and scenery which is pictured to us so happily by Mr. Prothero in the book whose title I have taken for this chapter ; the aspect of Provincial France, the land of quiet towns with quaint corners and crevices, of fertile plains, of small estates, of poplar-bordered streams.

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Ruskin had the artist's eye for the charm of the quieter French landscape—such as Mr. David Murray shows us in his “Picardy Pastorals.” France was for him the vestibule of the Alps, and he was born at a time when the travelling through it was leisurely. His first impressions of “abroad” were of easy days spent in quiet drives through river valleys, and he came to love the French landscape dearly. To this appreciation he was brought in part as Turner's disciple. “Of all foreign countries,” he wrote in *Modern Painters*, “Turner has most entirely entered into the spirit of France ; partly because here he found more fellowship of scene with his own England ; partly because an amount of thought which will miss of Italy or Switzerland will fathom France ; partly because there is in the French foliage and forms of ground much that is especially congenial with his own peculiar choice of form. To what cause it is owing I cannot tell ; nor is it generally allowed or felt ; but of the fact I am certain, that for grace of stem and perfection of form in their transparent foliage, the French trees are altogether unmatched ; and their modes of grouping and massing are so perfectly and constantly beautiful, that, I think, of all countries for educating an artist to the perception of grace, France bears the bell ; and that, not romantic nor mountainous France, not the Vosges, nor Auvergne, nor Provence, but lowland France, Picardy and Normandy, the valleys of the Loire and Seine, and even the district, so thoughtlessly and mindlessly abused by English travellers as uninteresting, traversed between Calais and Dijon ; of which there is not a single valley but is full of the most lovely pictures, nor a mile from which the artist may not receive instruction ; the district immediately about Sens being perhaps the most valuable, from the grandeur of its lines of poplars, and the unimaginable finish and beauty of the tree forms in the two great avenues without the walls. Of this kind of beauty

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Turner was the first to take cognizance, and he still remains the only, but in himself, the sufficient, painter of French landscape." This is an aspect of French scenery to which he often recurred in admiration. In a later volume of the same book he likens the ideal landscape of the "Odyssey" to "such a scene as meets the eye of the traveller every instant on the much despised lines of road through lowland France ; for instance, on the railway between Arras and Amiens ;—scenes, to my mind, quite exquisite in the various grouping and grace of their innumerable poplar avenues, casting sweet, tremulous shadows over their level meadows and labyrinthine streams." This was the impression left by his earlier tours, and it remained with him to the end. "France as lovely as ever," he wrote in 1880 when he was on a sketching-tour with Mr. Brabazon and Mr. Arthur Severn ; "the villages along the coteau from Abbeville to Amiens entirely divine, with their orchards and harvests, and hills of sweet pastoral swelling above."<sup>1</sup> The very air of France had enchantment for him. Men often admire and judge with the heart, he wrote in *Modern Painters*, and not with the eyes. "How many people are misled by what has been said and sung of the serenity of Italian skies, to suppose they must be more *blue* than the skies of the north, and think that they see them so ; whereas the sky of Italy is far more dull and grey in colour than the skies of the north, and is distinguished only by its intense repose of light." He refers to Benvenuto Cellini, who on first entering France was especially struck with the clearness of the sky. In describing a miraculous aureole of glory which rested on his head, Benvenuto says : "I became aware of it in France at Paris ; for the air in those parts is so much freer from mist, that one can see it there far better manifested than in Italy, mists being far more frequent among us." Ruskin agreed with

<sup>1</sup> See Library Edition, vol. xxxiii. p. xxiv.

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Benvenuto, and used to note with keen enjoyment "the clear crystalline French sunlight like Paradise."<sup>1</sup> If Ruskin had been driven to name his "second country," I suspect that he might have chosen the pleasant land of France.

Few parts of the country were unknown to him ; but, as has already appeared, he had his favourite regions, and we may here accompany him on travels to his more habitual haunts. A long tour which Ruskin made through Normandy in 1848 is associated with one of his most famous books—*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. The scope of the studies from which he illustrated the general principles laid down in that essay was explained in its preface. "My affections," he says, "as well as my experience, lead me to that line of richly varied and magnificently intellectual schools, which reaches, like a high watershed of Christian architecture, from the Adriatic to the Northumbrian seas, bordered by the impure schools of Spain on the one hand, and of Germany on the other ; and as culminating points and centres of the chain, I have considered, first, the cities of the Val d'Arno, as representing the Italian Romanesque and pure Italian Gothic ; Venice and Verona, as representing the Italian Gothic coloured by Byzantine elements ; and Rouen, with the associated Norman cities, Caen, Bayeux, and Coutances, as representing the entire range of Northern architecture from Romanesque to Flamboyant." Every reader of *The Seven Lamps* knows how frequent and how detailed are the illustrations from the architecture of the Norman towns. The whole course of the tour of 1848 may be traced in the biographical introduction supplied to that book in the Library Edition ; and it will there be seen that the country delighted him no less than the churches. "You never saw anything yet in France," he wrote, for instance, from Lisieux, "so lovely as this

<sup>1</sup> See Library Edition, vol. vii. p. xx.

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Normandy—just fancy valleys like rich bits of Italy, tufted with elm, poplar, willow and Spanish chestnut, set between round sweeping hills of purple heather. I never saw such a lovely contrast of purple and green.” It was at Rouen, as might be gathered from the number and fulness of references to it in *The Seven Lamps*, that Ruskin spent the greater part of his time in the tour of 1848. It was, he said in later years, one of his tutress cities, and a glance at the Index to his Complete Works will show how much he found to say about it, how many were the architectural points which he illustrated from her monuments. He had gone round about her, and told the towers thereof, marking well her bulwarks, considering her palaces, that he might tell it to the generation following. Rouen is indeed one of the cities which are most closely associated with Ruskin, because by him most fully and suggestively appreciated. This was the opinion of Samuel Prout. “Rouen,” he wrote to Ruskin, “is a city of which you write as one having authority; it is after your own heart and, although much loved by myself, is best appreciated by you.” Modern improvement has been destructively busy at Rouen; but Ruskin had seen and loved it in old days (in 1835 first), and here is his description of the city as Prout and he had seen it: “The façade of the Cathedral was as yet unencumbered by the blocks of new stonework, never to be carved, by which it is now defaced; the Church of St. Nicholas existed (the last fragments of the niches of its gateway were seen by the writer dashed upon the pavement in 1840 to make room for the new ‘Hôtel St. Nicholas’); the Gothic turret had not vanished from the angle of the Place de la Pucelle, the Palais de Justice remained in its grey antiquity, and the Norman houses still lifted their fantastic ridges of gable along the busy quay (now fronted by as formal a range of hotels and offices as that of the West Cliff of





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Brighton). All was at unity with itself, and the city lay under its guarding hills, one labyrinth of delight, its grey and fretted towers, misty in their magnificence of height, letting the sky-like blue enamel through the foiled spaces of their crowns of open work ; the walls and gates of its countless churches wardered by saintly groups of solemn statuary, clasped about by wandering stems of sculptured leafage, and crowned by fretted niche and fairy pediment—meshed like gossamer with inextricable tracery : many a quaint monument of past times standing to tell its far-off tale in the place from which it has since perished—in the midst of the throng and murmur of those shadowy streets—all grim with jutting props of ebon woodwork, lightened only here and there by a sunbeam glancing down from the scaly backs, and points, and pyramids of the Norman roofs, or carried out of its narrow range by the gay progress of some snowy cap or scarlet camisole.” Ruskin came to admire the Southern Gothic more than the Northern<sup>1</sup> ; yet nothing ever gave him such intense joy as he had felt in the fretted pinnacles of Rouen. I must refer any reader to the Index above mentioned who desires to collect all that Ruskin has to say about the Cathedral. Here I can only find room for allusion to one part of that multitudinous pile—a part which must have been a favourite haunt of Ruskin’s, so many and so various are his studies and reflections upon it. This is the door to the Northern transept. That door might well be taken, he had said in *The Seven Lamps*, as a standard example in exquisite decoration. A few years later it was restored, and he cited the work as an instance of the loss which even the best restoration entails : “ I have given many years, in many cities, to the study of Gothic architecture ; and of all that I know, or knew, the entrance to the north transept of Rouen Cathedral

<sup>1</sup> See *The Stones of Venice*, for instance, vol. i. ch. xiii. § 9.

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was, on the whole, the most beautiful—beautiful, not only as an elaborate and faultless work of the finest time of Gothic art, but yet more beautiful in the partial, though not dangerous, decay which had touched its pinnacles with pensive colouring, and softened its severer lines with unexpected change and delicate fracture, like sweet breaks in a distant music. The upper part of it has been already restored to the white accuracies of novelty ; the lower pinnacles, which flanked its approach, far more exquisite in their partial ruin than the loveliest remains of our English abbeys, have been entirely destroyed, and rebuilt in rough blocks, now (1854) in process of sculpture. This restoration, so far as it has gone, has been executed by peculiarly skilful workmen ; it is an unusually favourable example of restoration, especially in the care which has been taken to preserve intact the exquisite, and hitherto almost uninjured, sculptures which fill the quatrefoils of the tracery above the arch. But I happened myself to have made, five years ago, detailed drawings of the buttress decorations on the right and left of this tracery, which are part of the work that has been completely restored. And I found the restorations as inaccurate as they were unnecessary.”<sup>1</sup> Some of the details here referred to are etched in *The Seven Lamps*. The panel decoration upon the buttresses is described and illustrated in that book as marking “ the great watershed of Gothic art ” ; the culminating point “ in the noblest manner of Northern Gothic ” tracery, before the fatal descent began in “ the substitution of the *line* for the *mass* as the element of decoration.” To the detailed carvings of the door itself Ruskin also devoted several pages ; for indeed the door illustrates in an astonishing way his lamps alike of “ sacrifice,” of “ truth,” and of “ life.” There are “ 596 minor carvings on this one doorway, all of them representing

<sup>1</sup> *The Opening of the Crystal Palace*, § 12.

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living things, and all of them subsidiary to the larger subjects which they frame. Think," says a later writer, in commenting upon Ruskin's description, "of the life and energy that were pulsing through the brain of the craftsman who could so fill the surface of the stone. Think of the time he was ready to give up to patient chiselling at this one task till it was perfect to his mind."<sup>1</sup>

It is no wonder that Ruskin found Rouen inexhaustible. "I still feel," he wrote after three weeks' continuous work there in 1848, "that I leave this place unseen." He often revisited it; but his more habitual journey in France was from Calais to Paris, and thence on to Dijon. Calais was his favourite port of entry, though he was fond too of Boulogne, and spent several weeks there in 1861—learning to sail a lugger with a pilot "who talked like Rochefoucauld," and finding many of Turner's points of view along the coast. His piece on Calais at the beginning of the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* is, according to Rossetti, one of the "glorious things" in the book: "I cannot find words to express the intense pleasure I have always in first finding myself, after some prolonged stay in England, at the foot of the old tower of Calais church. The large neglect, the noble unsightliness of it; the record of its years written so visibly, yet without sign of weakness or decay; its stern wasteness and gloom, eaten away by the Channel winds, and overgrown with the bitter sea-grasses; its slates and tiles all shaken and rent, and yet not falling; its desert of brickwork full of bolts, and holes, and ugly fissures, and yet strong, like a bare brown rock; its carelessness of what any one thinks or feels about it, putting forth no claim, having no beauty or desirableness, pride, nor grace; yet neither asking for pity; not, as ruins are, useless and piteous, freely or fondly

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of Rouen*, by Theodore Andrea Cook, p. 124.

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garrulous of better days ; but useful still, going through its own daily work,—as some o'd fisherman beaten grey by storm, yet drawing his daily nets : so it stands, with no complaint about its past youth, in blanched and meagre massiveness and serviceableness, gathering human souls together underneath it ; the sound of its bells for prayer still rolling through its rents ; and the grey peak of it seen far across the sea, principal of the three that rise above the waste of surfy sand and hillocked shore,—the lighthouse for life, and the belfry for labour, and this for patience and praise.” The aspect of Calais has much changed during recent years, but the three landmarks still remain. Most people, I suppose, have their rosary of literary pieces about places ; on which the beads are often strung by accident or in curious company. I can never cross from Dover to Calais and back without thinking first of the Mock Turtle’s song in *Alice’s Adventures* :—

There is another shore, you know, upon the other side,  
The farther off from England the nearer is to France ;

then of Ruskin’s “ glorious thing ” ; and next of Arnold’s lines :—

A thousand Knights have reined their steeds  
To watch this line of sandhills run,  
Along the never silent Strait,  
To Calais glittering in the sun.

From Calais, Ruskin’s journey by road took him to Abbeville and Amiens, to which places we will follow him presently. At Paris his haunts were Meurice’s hotel, and whatever theatre attracted him at the time. The first halt after Paris was made at Fontainebleau, which place is associated with artistic revelation to Ruskin as to other famous men. On his journey of 1842 he spent some time in the forest and one day found himself lying, he says, “ on the bank of a cart-road in the sand, with no prospect

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whatever but a small aspen tree against the blue sky. Languidly, but not idly, I began to draw it ; and as I drew, the languor passed away ; the beautiful lines insisted on being traced. With wonder increasing every instant, I saw that they ‘composed’ themselves by finer laws than any known of men. ‘He hath made everything beautiful in his time,’ became for me thenceforward the interpretation of the bond between the human mind and all visible things ; and I returned along the wood-road feeling that it had led me far.” Ruskin had no sympathy or understanding for the modern school of French landscape ; but it is interesting to know that the same forest which inspired Corot and Rousseau and Diaz had taught a lesson to the author of *Modern Painters* also.

Another place which has special association with Ruskin is Sens. Of the charm of its landscape, we have already heard him speak. It was one of his favourite stopping-places in the days of posting-tours through France to Switzerland ; it was in the old inn there that he etched in some of the plates for *The Seven Lamps* ; and several of the architectural details in the first volume of *The Stones of Venice* were drawn from the Cathedral. He loved the old inn even as did Dickens, and often refers to the “inimitable” or “matchless” description of it in *Mrs. Livriper’s Legacy* : “The pleasantest situated inn, my dear ! Right under the two towers, with their shadows a-changing upon it all day like a kind of sundial, and country people driving in and out of the courtyard in carts and hooded cabriolets and such-like, and a market outside in front of the cathedral, and all so quaint and like a picter.” The next day’s favourite stopping-place on the road to Dijon was Montbard, the birthplace of Buffon, who lived afterward in the château which he purchased and rebuilt. A high square tower of the thirteenth century

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commanding a wide prospect was left standing, and Ruskin recalled in old age "the happy walks one used to have on the terrace under Buffon's tower."<sup>1</sup> An easy day's posting brought Ruskin next to Dijon, and the journey was generally so planned that the Sunday's rest might be spent there. He stopped always at the "Cloche," still a famous hostelry, which from his many visits—fourteen at least—he reckoned among his foreign homes. References to architectural features of the town are numerous in his books, and he visited places of interest in the neighbourhood—such as Fontaine, the birthplace of St. Bernard, and the abbey of Cîteaux. There is a pleasant account of a journey to them in Mr. Collingwood's *Ruskin Relics*, and Ruskin's own piece entitled "Mending the Sieve" records it. His route beyond Dijon has been traced in an earlier chapter.

A little tour in France which is often taken in these days by travellers who break their journey on the direct line from Calais or Boulogne to Bâle will bring us to some other of Ruskin's favourite haunts. One stops first at Abbeville; but not in the way which Ruskin recalled from his earlier visits: "You stopped at the brow of the hill to put the drag on, and looked up to see where you were:—and there lay beneath you, far as eye could reach on either side, this wonderful valley of the Somme,—with line on line of tufted aspen and tall poplar, making the blue distances more exquisite in bloom by the gleam of their leaves; and in the midst of it, by the glittering of the divided streams of its river, lay the clustered mossy roofs of Abbeville, like a purple flake of cloud, with the precipitous mass of the Cathedral towers rising mountainous through them, and here and there, in the midst of them, spaces of garden close set with pure green trees, bossy and perfect. So you trotted down the hill . . . and you

<sup>1</sup> *Proserpina*, vol. ii. chap. iv.



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were in the gay street of a populous yet peaceful city—a fellowship of ancient houses set beside each other, with all the active companionship of business and sociableness of old friends, and yet each with the staid and self-possessed look of country houses surrounded by hereditary fields . . . each with its own character and fearlessly independent ways—its own steep gable, narrow or wide—its special little peaked window set this way and that as the fancy took them—its most particular old corners, and outs and ins of wall to make the most of the ground and sunshine—its own turret staircase, in the inner angle of the courtyard,—its own designs and fancies in carving of basket and beam,—its own only bridge over the clear branchlet of the Somme that rippled at its garden gate.”

“ All that is gone,” added Ruskin in 1868, “and most of Abbeville is like most of London—rows of houses all alike, with an heap of brickbats at the end of it.” But a good deal of the old remains. The Cathedral of St. Wulfran is as full of interest as ever for those who care to see flamboyant architecture putting forth one glory more before it passed away. No handbook could be more delightful than the volume of Ruskin containing his lecture “ On the Flamboyant Architecture of the Valley of the Somme,” from which I have quoted above. The lecture was the result of a visit of some months which Ruskin paid to Abbeville in 1868, but he had often been there in earlier years, and of no place did he retain in old age more fond recollections. “ My most intense happinesses,” he says in *Præterita*, “ have of course been among mountains. But for cheerful, unalloyed, unwearying pleasure, the getting in sight of Abbeville on a fine summer afternoon, jumping out of the courtyard of the Hôtel de l’Europe, and rushing down the street to see St. Wulfran again before the sun was off the towers, are things to cherish the past for,—to the

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end." Much, too, of "the fellowship of ancient houses" remains. The market-place (Place Admiral Courbet) is the subject of one of Ruskin's most elaborate and successful pencil drawings, made in 1868 and now in his Drawing School at Oxford. Miss Warren's drawing (Plate XXII) was made in 1910, and a comparison of the two shows very little alteration in the scene; even many of the family names on the shop-fronts are unchanged. It is now some years since I was in the town; but a recent visitor in a *causerie* entitled "Ruskin for Respite" has this passage: "Were I at this moment seeking solace from things bad all round, in Ruskin's haunts instead of in his annals, it would be in Abbeville for choice. Some of the old houses that Prout and Ruskin drew are gone, but Ruskin's drawing of the Place Admiral Courbet is behind in no particular, and the little Rue de l'Hôtel Dieu, drawn divinely in pencil by Prout before Ruskin knew it, still leads you into the gloom of St. Wulfran's base; the very finials on the dormer windows are Prout's. On a warm evening the bats flit about them, teasing your eye until it rests on the great flamboyant church, soaring into the light of the Somme valley. Church, town, and river stand for nearly all that Ruskin loved, fruitfully or in vain."<sup>1</sup> Very pleasant also is the walk by the gardens, the canal, and the river, between the town and the railway station, with glimpses here and there of the Cathedral towers. There is another charming view of St. Wulfran from the breezy ramparts where, between a gap in the trees, the towers look at you over the tall roofs and pleasant gardens of some of the wealthier citizens. But wherever you go, the Cathedral dominates the scene; and you recollect how much of the majesty of French landscape depends upon its grand and grey church towers.

The domination of the town by the Cathedral is perhaps more

<sup>1</sup> W. W., in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 16, 1912.



## ABBEVILLE: THE MARKET PLACE





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marked still at Amiens, which is our next stopping-place, and which is yet more closely associated with Ruskin's work. Abbeville is after all not much of a town to dominate. It is indeed a thriving place; it does a good trade in woollens, has well-laden barges on its canal, and even talks to you of its "harbour." But Amiens is several times its size, and is one of the important manufacturing towns of France. It counts its tall chimneys by hundreds, and its velvets now as five hundred years ago are famous in many lands. But the past asserts itself over the present for all that; the one thing that haunts you everywhere is the mass of the Cathedral wall rising in the centre of the town. There is probably no building in the world, says Ruskin, which "looks loftier with so temperate and prudent a measure of actual loftiness." Everyone is struck with the height of the choir as seen from the interior; it is the first and last impression you receive, and you can hardly believe, what is nevertheless the fact, that Dover Cliff, which you have left behind, is twice, or that the Staubbach Cliff, which you may be on your way to see, is at least six times, as high. But the impression of size grows upon you even more as you leave the Cathedral behind you; the farther you go within range of it the vaster it looks, until it seems to rise to its full height only as you catch the last glimpse. The sense of magnitude which the Cathedral of Amiens thus conveys is no doubt largely due to the builder's observance of a law enforced by Ruskin in *The Seven Lamps*: "Let your building be well gathered together," for "those buildings seem on the whole the vastest which have been gathered up into a mighty square and which look as if they had been measured by the angel's rod, *the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*" But it were superfluous to say much about the Cathedral here. Ruskin has devoted a book to it—*The Bible of Amiens*. It is in the hands

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of most English, and now of many French, visitors to Amiens, and the series of photographs which he had made of the quatrefoils of the western façade is on sale at shops in the town. Ruskin, says M. Marcel Proust, the French translator of his book, "has impressed his soul upon the Stones of Amiens; and as one stands before the sculptures of the four Great Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, one remembers that there is another who is not there and yet of whom one cannot say that he is absent, for one sees him everywhere. It is Ruskin; his statue is not on the portal of the Cathedral, but it is at the entrance of our heart."

Ruskin says that the best way to approach the Cathedral is to walk down the main street of the old town and, past the Botanical Garden, across the river to the citadel, and thence to recross the ascending slopes of the city. From the other side of the river, just below the citadel, there are also fine views of the Cathedral. Miss Warren's drawing (Plate XXIII) was made from one of these points. There, as everywhere else, the town seems to arrange itself as a setting for the church. It is in the narrow cross-streets and by the bridges on this walk that you get the best idea of Amiens past and present. You cannot escape the blank walls with the port-holes which serve for windows in modern factories, but the apse of some old church will recall the past when all the houses were such as still here and there remain, each with its own wooden bridge across the streams. It is all very picturesque, but the human element, if one stays long enough to feel it, gives a tone of melancholy to the picture. Here is a descriptive passage which portrays the scene:—

"I had a happy walk here this afternoon down among the branching currents of the Somme; it divides into five or six,—shallow, green, and not over-wholesome; some quite narrow and





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foul, running beneath clusters of fearful houses, reeling masses of rotten timber ; and a few mere stumps of pollard willow sticking out of the banks of soft mud, only retained in shape of bank by being shored up with timbers ; and boats like paper boats, nearly as thin at least, for the costermongers to paddle about in among the weeds, the water soaking through the lath bottoms, and floating the dead leaves from the vegetable-baskets with which they were loaded. Miserable little back-yards, opening to the water, with steep stone steps down to it, and little platforms for the ducks ; and separate duck staircases, composed of a sloping board with cross bits of wood leading to the ducks' doors ; and sometimes a flower-pot or two on them, or even a flower,—one group, of wallflowers and geraniums, curiously vivid, being seen against the darkness of a dyer's back-yard, who had been dyeing black all day, and all was black in his yard but the flowers, and they fiery and pure ; the water by no means so, but still working its way steadily over the weeds, until it narrowed into a current strong enough to turn two or three mill-wheels, one working against the side of an old flamboyant Gothic church, whose richly traceried buttresses sloped into the filthy stream ; —all exquisitely picturesque, and no less miserable. We delight in seeing the figures in these boats pushing them about the bits of blue water, in Prout's drawings ; but as I looked to-day at the unhealthy face and melancholy mien of the man in the boat pushing his load of peats along the ditch, and of the people, men as well as women, who sat spinning gloomily at the cottage doors, I could not help feeling how many suffering persons must pay for my picturesque subject and happy walk." Ruskin quoted this passage from his diary at Amiens (in 1854) in a footnote to his chapter on the Picturesque in *Modern Painters*. Its accuracy and beauty will be recognised by many visitors. It serves also

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to illustrate the minute observation which Ruskin habitually practised during his travels.

Laon, which is generally the next stopping-place for the railway traveller who breaks his journey to Bâle, was visited by Ruskin in 1841 and not again till 1882. On his first visit, he had been struck chiefly by the beauty of the characteristic French landscape around the town. On his longer visit in 1882, he was interested in and charmed with everything about the place—with the curious geological formation on which the town stands, with the architecture of the Cathedral, with the quaint, old-fashioned nooks and corners in the streets, and again with the landscape. He sketched indefatigably himself, and set pupils and friendly artists to sketch also. Some of their drawings may be seen in the Ruskin Museum at Sheffield. The town is perched upon a hill which drops abruptly to the plain, and the carriage-road from the station goes round and round in zigzags as if it were in Switzerland or Italy. It is this which gives Laon so marked an individuality ; it is at once a piece of mediæval France, with its old gates and ramparts still almost intact and with a noble cathedral crowning the town, and a piece of Italy—Orvieto you might almost think it. Mr. Henry James, in his *Little Tour in France*, likens it to Perugia. Ruskin found points of resemblance to it in Assisi and Siena. Sometimes, strange as it may seem, when at Laon I have fancied myself to be at the top of some campanile in Venice. Very curious, for instance, is the view from the ramparts of Laon by night—the great plain of France which surrounds the town on all sides looking not unlike the lagunes at low water, and the patches of cornfield standing out here and there like the “ dead ” lagune. The white road forms pathways of light ; and let those who say that there can be no poetry in iron rails look down from Laon by night upon the long line of railway lights below him ; it is every

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whit as picturesque as "the line of festal light in Christ Church Hall" which the Scholar Gipsy once turned to watch from the white brow of the Cumnor range. The festal lights are hung sometimes in Laon itself, and very pretty are the festoons of lamps which they swing across from the trees that line the ramparts round the town. Everything is in keeping with the old-world idea at Laon. The inn itself is a rambling old house,<sup>1</sup> with its sign of the wild boar swinging out into the street. There is a courtyard inside where the loads of hay are piled, for use in the stables at the back. The kitchen opens out on one side, the *salle à manger* on the other. Nearly opposite the inn is one of the old gateways of the town. You go through this and come to a photographer's from whose balcony there is a charming retrospect of the gateway. The garden is bright with roses and slopes up to the old walls of the town, which are covered with wistaria and other creepers. The houses are built into the walls, and the walk outside the ramparts offers a delightful confusion of buttresses, balconies, and gardens. There are modern houses built down the sides of the hill, but it is steep, and from the top you see nothing but a maze of green shutters and high garden walls, while beyond them stretches the broad plain, on this side richly wooded. But all this is an aspect of the place which has been inimitably described by Ruskin in one of his familiar letters.<sup>2</sup> There are several "objects of interest," too, in Laon. About the cathedral a word or two shall be said presently. Then there is the fine church of St. Martin at the western extremity of the hill. St. Martin may be seen in the gable dividing his cloak; and it was in the abbey attached (now turned into a hospital) that Anselm

<sup>1</sup> The Hôtel de la Hure. Ruskin, however, stayed at the "Écu de France." At Amiens his hotel was the "France."

<sup>2</sup> See the Library Edition, vol. xxxv. p. 618.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

and Abelard once taught. There is an octagonal Templar's chapel, too, and there is a leaning tower ; but it is the walk round the ramparts, where remains of the old walls and towers mix with the native rock, and where buttresses with trees and creepers overhanging them flank the walls, that lingers longest in the memory after a day or two at Laon. The town occupies, as everyone knows, a strong military position, and has been the scene of many a siege and battle for two thousand years. The town surrendered to the Germans in 1870, and patriotic memories are keen. I remember witnessing a sale of game in the square at Laon some years ago, at which a hare was put up to auction. The bids progressed merrily until some one in the crowd started the suspicion that it might be a German hare. Not another bid was made until the vendor had with difficulty persuaded the company that he was not the man to insult them by offering anything German.

The Cathedral of Laon is a graceful and interesting building. It dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century, and was designed to be a mass of towers and spires ; but these were never finished, or have disappeared, and the church, shorn of its spires, and showing for the most part only the pedestals of its towers, wears a very fantastic look. The two flanking towers of the west end alone are finished ; and these the visitor should make a point of ascending—partly for the curious and magnificent view they afford of the surrounding country, and partly to see the famous oxen. “ In the Cathedral of Laon,” says Ruskin, “ there is a pretty compliment paid to the oxen who carried the stones of its tower to the hill-top it stands on. The tradition is that they harnessed themselves,—but tradition does not say how an ox *can* harness himself even if he had the mind. Probably the best form of the story was that they went joyfully, ‘ lowing as



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they went.' But at all events their statues are carved on the height of the tower, eight, colossal, looking from its galleries across the plains of France."<sup>1</sup> It is Guibert de Nogent who gives the tradition. One day one of the oxen carrying up the materials fell fatigued when another mysteriously appeared and harnessed itself to the yoke. "The people for whom the sculptor worked," says M. Mâle,<sup>2</sup> "could not think without emotion of the brave beasts who worked like good Christians at the house of God." But the prettiness of the compliment, as seen from below, is a little spoilt by closer inspection; for when you mount the tower you find that the sculptor has given the poor beasts only half a body; they are deliberately broken off in the middle as soon as they are no longer visible from below, and a very sorry sight they present at close quarters. This looks bad, no doubt, by the light of Ruskin's "Lamp of Truth"; but before blaming the workman of five hundred years ago, one may profitably pause to doubt whether (as Mr. James happily puts it) "a modern architect, in settling his accounts, would have 'remembered,' as they say, the oxen at all." Half an ox is better than none.

From Laon we proceed to Rheims. "What a contrast," exclaims Ruskin in *The Seven Lamps*, "between the pitiful little pigeon-holes which stand for doors in the front of Salisbury, looking like the entrances to a beehive or a wasp's nest, and the soaring arches and kingly crowning of the gates of Abbeville, Rouen and Rheims!" Visitors have been known nevertheless to find the Cathedral of Rheims disappointing, especially if they have come straight to it from Amiens. A first sight of the great building is best obtained, I think, at evening. You go to the Lion d'Or, and there, if you are fortunate enough to secure a room

<sup>1</sup> *Bible of Amiens*, ch. iv. § 41, note.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Art Religieux de xiii<sup>e</sup> Siècle*.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

in the front of the house, your window will be "like a proscenium box at the play." That was the experience of Mr. Henry James. To admire the Cathedral front at your leisure, "you have only," as he says, "to perch yourself in the casement with a good opera glass and sit there watching the great architectural drama." A drama Mr. James rightly calls it, for there is no cathedral more animated with sculptural decoration. But there is nothing like the twilight for enhancing the general effect of the "soaring arches and kingly crowning" of this great cathedral front. Most striking of all is the sight of it by moonlight, when it rises up before you—white now instead of grey—like some ghost of the past, big with the faiths and fancies of the mediæval world. The architect is told in *The Seven Lamps* to "conceive his design as it will be when the dawn lights it and the dusk leaves it; when its stones will be hot, and its crannies cool; when the lizards will bask on the one and the birds build in the other. Let him design with a sense of cold and heat upon him; let him cut out the shadows as men dig wells in unwatered plains; and lead along the lights, as a founder does his hot metal." Nowhere has one side of this principle been carried out to better effect than at Rheims. Disappointment is impossible if you see the Cathedral just as the dusk leaves it. When daylight comes, you may perhaps agree with Ruskin that the ornament is a little overcharged, and that the sculpture takes too much the look of incrustation. Yet the stones of Rheims are everywhere alive; showing the minutest humour as well as the grandest design. I have always been amused by the bas-relief on the left portal of the north transept representing the Last Judgment. The Saviour sits enthroned above, surrounded by kneeling penitents and stretching out his arms in blessing. Below him, the dead rise out of curiously carved tombs or chests, some of them playing rather



CHARTRES CATHEDRAL: INTERIOR (THE SOUTH AMBULATORY)



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flippantly with their coffin lids ; and some—the most wicked perhaps—consigned to mere tubs. On a lower tier, and to the right of the Saviour, come the saints and apostles, receiving their meed of glory on the one side, while on the other, the left, the wicked appear to be having a very rough time, though they are so effaced and broken that one cannot tell exactly what is happening to them. The most curious tier of figures is the next, or fourth, where on one side the souls of the righteous are brought up by attendant angels, in the shape of new-born infants (“ except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven ”), while on the left a most appalling-looking demon draws the wicked together with a rope to where his comrade is pushing others down into a boiling cauldron of the sinners, among whom are several bishops : they were no respecters of persons, the sculptors of the Middle Ages. It must be admitted that the wicked are going most calmly and resignedly to their doom.

The three little tours among French towns upon which we have accompanied Ruskin have left out one cathedral which he admired perhaps more than any other—the Cathedral of Chartres. He was first at Chartres in 1840, and he revisited it many times. In 1844 he made a minute study of its glorious glass, as a preparation for his own attempt in that art.<sup>1</sup> In his Inaugural Lectures at Oxford, he took the Cathedral of Chartres as “ the most noble ” instance of decoration with which he was acquainted. “ You have there the most splendid coloured glass, and the richest sculpture, and the grandest proportions of building, united to produce a sensation of pleasure and awe.” His passages on the coloured glass may be found in the twelfth volume of his Works. Miss Warren’s drawing (Plate XXIV) shows one of the windows in the southern ambulatory. The “ rock-hewn piers ” of the

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 18.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

Cathedral are extolled in *The Seven Lamps*. The Cathedral of Chartres, he said in his lecture on "The Unity of Art," is the "true centre of Gothic power in France"; and in another of the lectures collected in the book called *The Two Paths* he described some of the statues on the west front as the consummate type of sculpture. Many other references to Chartres are scattered in his published books, and he had intended to write a separate book, uniform with *The Bible of Amiens*, wholly devoted to the Cathedral. It was to have been called "The Springs of Eure." Our second plate of Chartres (Plate XXV) gives a view of which a pencil sketch by Ruskin was exhibited in 1907. "The Cathedral seen over cabbage fields above coteaux of the Eure on the N. bank," he called it. The point of view is reached by a walk of an hour or so from the town, across the double-arched bridge; it is near the barracks.

Ruskin knew and loved many other French towns and churches. Thus he had studied and sketched at Avallon, Beauvais, Blois, Bourges, Caen, Caudebec, Châlons, Coutances, Dieppe, Falaise, Le Puy, Lisieux, Lyons, Nancy, Paris, St. Lô, Valence. Which, it may be asked, were his favourite cathedrals, or rather those which on impartial consideration he most admired? In one place he names four—Chartres, Rheims, Rouen, Amiens; in another, naming six, he adds to those four, Bourges and Notre Dame de Paris. As for the first place of all, we have heard him admit, as it would seem, the claim of Chartres. Yet elsewhere, while confessing that Amiens is in dignity inferior to Chartres, in sublimity to Beauvais, in decorative splendour to Rheims, and in loveliness of figure sculpture to Bourges, he accepts M. Viollet-le-Duc's claim that the Cathedral of Amiens must be considered "The Parthenon of Gothic Architecture." Perhaps, if he had written a book on each of the famous churches named above he



## CHARTRES CATHEDRAL







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would have claimed " the admitted privilege of a custode who loves his cathedral " and have given to each in turn the pride of place.

Among custodes and other sympathetic souls memories of Ruskin have lingered long in his French haunts. Does the tallow-chandler of Abbeville still live, I wonder, in whose shop Ruskin used to sit sketching on rainy days when they discussed together the ethics of church candles? The good sister at the Convent of St. Michael at Le Puy who reasoned with him to prove that so good a Christian as he should not be other than a Catholic must long ago have passed to where beyond these voices there is peace from the contention of the churches. At Rouen, in the Church of St. Ouen, " it may be," says Mr. Theodore Andrea Cook, " that the old Sacristan, for your good fortune, will be living still to tell you of the greatest Englishman he has ever heard of, John Ruskin, who often looked into the quaint mirror of Holy Water, and watched the strange reflection of the arches soaring upwards in the nave." The same, or another, sacristan used to take the visitor to a particular point which he called " La coin de vue de Ruskin." The old man died a few years ago, but handed on the tradition to his successor. In the Cathedral of Rouen, there is a sacristan who still takes the English visitor to see a tiny lizard carved on the stonework of the doorway which Ruskin used to admire greatly and which he never failed to point out to anyone who was with him. " At Amiens," says Sir William Richmond, " nearly all the custodians of the cathedral about which he wrote so charmingly, possess letters from Mr. Ruskin written with as much care as to matter and style as if they had been intended for publication. In Perugia the same tale is told of him. There is something very touching in this. Eloquent men are apt to forget, and vain men to be content

# HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

with the possession of an audience ; it is only great men who prolong a friendship into space, without any chance of return through the Post Office or telegraph, remaining content with the certainty of a bond of real sympathy which space cannot destroy." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *St. George*, vol. v. p. 297.

## CHAPTER VIII

### VENICE

"English by birth, Venetian by heart, Ruskin has true right of Venetian citizenship, for but few of my compatriots have loved this our fatherland as he has loved it, and after having visited and loved it as a youth, studied, wrote of it and illustrated it over a course of thirty years."—COUNT ZORZI.

"WE edify ourselves," wrote George Eliot on her travels, "with what Ruskin has written about Venice." Two generations of English and American travellers have done the same, and what he has written about Venice has also been widely read in French and German translations. In some sense, indeed, Ruskin may be said to have discovered Venice to the modern world.

Venice had been, it is true, a favourite haunt with travellers of many nations for many centuries before Ruskin, but she was visited for reasons and with eyes very different from those of the modern tourist or student. Referring to the alleged "commercial appetite" which is supposed to have governed the zeal of Venice for the crusades, Ruskin says that "Venice was sincerely pious and intensely covetous. But not covetous merely of money. She was covetous, first, of fame; secondly, of kingdom; thirdly, of pillars of marble and granite; lastly, and quite principally, of the relics of good people." It was this last form of acquisition to which Venice owed her early influx of foreign visitors. In the Middle Ages men became tourists in order to visit holy places and holy relics, and Venice rivalled even Rome in the number of its relics.<sup>1</sup> Then, at a later age, Venice was visited as the city of

<sup>1</sup> See the "History of Travel in Italy" in Mr. James Sully's *Italian Travel Sketches*.

# HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

a Great Power, the centre of a world-state ; the papers collected by the Record Office from the Venetian archives sufficiently attest this phase in her history. In the days of her political decline Venice suffered no diminution in her popularity with foreign visitors. She became one of the pleasure cities of Europe, and travellers went to her for her gay social life and her stately pageants. Venice, as Thackeray says in *The Four Georges*, " was the most jovial of all places at the end of the seventeenth century ; and military men after a campaign rushed thither, as the warriors of the Allies rushed to Paris in 1814, to gamble and rejoice and partake of all sorts of godless delights." This was the Venice of Byron :

" The pleasant place of all festivity,  
The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy "

—the Venice of Browning's " Toccata of Galuppi's " :

" Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it brings.  
What, they lived once thus at Venice, when the merchants were the kings,  
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings? . . .  
Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in May?  
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to midday  
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say? "

Some of those who went to Venice as a pleasure city had an eye for her artistic monuments, and she attracted also serious travellers making the grand tour. But the memoirs of visitors in the pre-Ruskinian era present as a whole these noteworthy features : they show little appreciation for the beauty of the place, and none for the architectural features which Ruskin has taught us to admire. There are, indeed, exceptions. Evelyn, for instance, though he dismisses St. Mark's as " gotiq " (barbarous), admired its mosaics, and appreciated the beautiful

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situation of Venice : " This city well deserved our admiration, being the most wonderfully placed of any in the world, built on so many hundred islands, in the very sea, and at good distance from the Continent." A later traveller, Mrs. Piozzi (Mrs. Thrale), in her *Observations* on her tour in 1789, wrote : " The Ducal Palace is so beautiful, it were worth while almost to cross the Alps to see that and return home again ; and St. Mark's Church, whose mosaic paintings on the outside are surpassed by no work of art, delights one no less on entering with its numberless rareties, the flooring first, which is all paved with precious stones." On the other hand, Sir Philip Sidney, who was in Venice during the winter of 1573-74, tells us very little of his impressions, and for anything that he says Venice might not have been a city in the sea at all. The Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu contain, under the year 1740, an account of the gay and brilliant life of the place ; but she says not a word of the buildings or of the beauty of Venice. " There is something bitterly melancholy to me," wrote Ruskin after reading the book, " in the short sentences which tell so much of pomp, pride, and thoughtlessness of what was to come upon them. I had no idea that the magnificence of Venice had endured so long." <sup>1</sup> The famous and picturesque ceremony of the Marriage of Venice with the Adriatic was continued up to 1796. It had for many years attracted visitors to Venice. Evelyn, who gives a description of it, explains that " the desire of seeing this was one of the reasons that hastened us from Rome." Visitors as a rule admired the spectacles more than the city itself. " Of all towns in Italy," wrote Gibbon in 1765, " I am the least satisfied with Venice. Objects which are only singular without being pleasing produce a momentary surprise which soon gives way to satiety and disgust. Old, and in general ill-built,

<sup>1</sup> See Library Edition, vol. ix. p. xxiv.

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houses, ruined pictures, and stinking ditches, dignified with the pompous denomination of canals, a fine bridge spoilt by two rows of houses upon it, and a large square decorated with the worst architecture I ever saw." Elizabeth Lady Craven, though she enjoyed the gaieties of the place, was upon her arrival at Venice in 1785, "struck with horror rather than with pleasure." "The houses are in the water," she explains, "and look dirty and uncomfortable on the outside; the innumerable quantity of gondolas, too, that look like swimming coffins, added to the dismal scene." Joseph Woods, of high repute as an architect and writer in his day, published in 1828 his *Letters from France, Italy, and Greece*. The Church of S. Marco "surprises you," he says, "more by its extreme ugliness than by anything else." "The Ducal Palace is even more ugly than anything I have previously mentioned." The painters of Venice disgusted him hardly less. The Caraccis, he thought, "shine like gods," in comparison with Titian and Tintoret and Paolo Veronese.

Ruskin's references to some of the Venetian buildings in *The Seven Lamps*, his analysis of Venetian architecture in *The Stones of Venice*, and his interpretation of Venetian pictures both in that book and in the second volume of *Modern Painters* effected a revolution in public taste. British visitors began to "edify themselves with what Ruskin had written about Venice." Ruskin himself had in the first instance been attracted to Venice by love of Byron; but his Venetian studies soon opened his eyes to the fact that Byron's view of Venice was melodramatic and by no means accurate. The principle which governed his own work at Venice was the significance of art, and especially of architecture, as an historical document. "Great nations," he said in the preface to *St. Mark's Rest*, "write their autobiographies in three manuscripts—the book of their deeds, the book of their words,



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and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others ; but of the three, the only quite trustworthy one is the last." For, as he goes on to explain, the art of a nation is the expression of the general gifts and common sympathies of the race, and, moreover, art is always instinctive and the honesty or pretence of it therefore palpable. The firm grasp which Ruskin held upon this principle was the original element in his Venetian work ; and he illustrated it with such copiousness of reference, such elaboration of detail, such eloquence and enthusiasm as arrested attention and compelled consideration. His famous description of the city in old times, in the last volume of *Modern Painters*, brings into one piece many of the notes which are most characteristic of his interpretation of Venice—the beauty of its situation, the splendour of its heroic period, the expression of that splendour and that heroism in its buildings and its paintings. He pictures for us the boyhood of Giorgione :—  
“ Have you ever thought what a world his eyes opened on—fair, searching eyes of youth ? What a world of mighty life, from those mountain roots to the shore ;—of loveliest life, when he went down, yet so young, to the marble city—and became himself as a fiery heart to it ? A city of marble, did I say ? nay, rather a golden city, paved with emerald. For truly, every pinnacle and turret glanced or glowed, overlaid with gold, or bossed with jasper. Beneath, the unsullied sea drew in deep breathing, to and fro, its eddies of green wave. Deep-hearted, majestic, terrible as the sea,—the men of Venice moved in sway of power and war ; pure as her pillars of alabaster, stood her mothers and maidens ; from foot to brow, all noble, walked her knights ; the low bronzed gleaming of sea-rusted armour shot angrily under their blood-red mantle-folds. Fearless, faithful, patient, impenetrable, implacable,—every word a fate, sate her senate. In hope and honour,

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lulled by flowing of wave around their isles of sacred sand, each with his name written and the cross graved at his side, lay her dead. A wonderful piece of world. Rather, itself a world. It lay along the face of the waters, no larger, as its captains saw it from their masts at evening, than a bar of sunset that could not pass away ; but for its power, it must have seemed to them as if they were sailing in the expanse of heaven, and this a great planet, whose orient edge widened through ether. A world from which all ignoble care and petty thoughts were banished, with all the common and poor elements of life. No foulness, nor tumult, in those tremulous streets, that filled, or fell, beneath the moon ; but rippled music of majestic change, or thrilling silence. No weak walls could rise above them ; no low-roofed cottage, nor straw-built shed. Only the strength as of rock, and the finished setting of stones most precious. And around them, far as the eye could reach, still the soft moving of stainless waters, proudly pure ; as not the flower, so neither the thorn nor the thistle, could grow in the glancing fields. Ethereal strength of Alps, dreamlike, vanishing in high procession beyond the Torcellan shore ; blue islands of Paduan hills, poised in the golden west. Above, free winds and fiery clouds ranging at their will ;—brightness out of the north, and balm from the south, and the stars of the evening and morning clear in the limitless light of arched heaven and circling sea. Such was Giorgione's school—such Titian's home."

Ruskin in his Venetian books opened the eyes of his readers to appreciate this " wonderful piece of world." He taught them to admire alike the Byzantine and the Gothic architecture of Venice. He showed them what was admirable in the Early Renaissance work, and what was faultful in the later development. At every point he treated architecture as an expression of human feelings, of national spirit, and thus made the stones of Venice

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serve as touchstones. His work on the Venetian painters, if in some respects less novel, was hardly less influential ; he introduced some of the painters to the British public, and he analysed the work of others—such as Tintoret and Paolo Veronese, with a fulness and a power of imaginative insight which were a revelation. He thus became the modern interpreter of Venice.

What he wrote about Venice was the fruit of long and laborious study, for the most part on the spot. “ All that I did at Venice,” he says, “ was bye-work, because her history had been falsely written before, and not even by any of her own people understood ; and because, in the world of painting, Tintoret was virtually unseen, Veronese unfelt, Carpaccio not so much as named, when I began to study them.” But the bye-work occupied Ruskin during a considerable portion of his working life. He spent successively a long winter there (1849–50), the greater part of a year (September 1851 to June 1852), and again (1876–77), almost as long a time. In eight other years he was at Venice, never for less than a week, often for two, three, four, or five weeks. A visit in 1845 was of special importance, as it was then that Ruskin received the revelation of Tintoret. On that occasion he was in Venice for five weeks. I have described fully elsewhere the industry with which Ruskin worked during these visits,<sup>1</sup> and the number of his catalogued sketches of Venice is over 200. At Venice, therefore, he had thus several homes and many haunts.

Ruskin's homes in Venice were in hotels or lodgings, all of which may be identified by the visitor to-day. On his earlier visits (1835, 1841, 1845, 1846) he stayed at Danieli's—originally the Palazzo Dandolo, built to receive the distinguished guests

<sup>1</sup> See Library Edition, introduction to vol. ix.

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of the Republic, and afterwards the Palazzo Noni-Mocenigo—then the principal resort of polite travellers, and still a favourite hostelry. “A very good house, and reckoned as the first in repute,” says an old edition of Murray’s *Handbook*: “the charge for a very good dinner in private for two persons, 5 francs each, wine included.” To Ruskin the house had further advantages. One was that which every visitor has at one time or another felt in Venice. The hotel had a water-gate; and “the beginning of everything,” says Ruskin of his early joy in Venice, “was in seeing the gondola-beak come actually inside the door at Danieli’s, when the tide was up, and the water two feet deep at the foot of the stairs.” The other attraction of Danieli’s to Ruskin was its then unspoilt architecture. “A glorious example of the central Gothic,” he wrote of it in *The Stones of Venice*, “nearly contemporary with the finest parts of the Ducal Palace. Though less impressive in effect than the Casa Foscari or Casa Bernardo, it is of purer architecture than either.” The angle-leaf of a capital in the inner cortile is the subject of one of his *Examples of Venetian Architecture*. It was at Danieli’s that Ruskin stayed also for some months in 1849–50. This was the first and shorter of the two visits during which he collected material for *The Stones* and the *Examples*. During the longer visit (September 1851 to June 1852) he took apartments in the house of the Baroness Wetzler in the Campo Sta Maria Zobenigo. The principal rooms looked out on the Grand Canal, nearly opposite the Salute; but the front door was in the Campo Sta Maria Zobenigo. Ruskin must have passed the Church of that name and S. Moisè on his daily walks to St. Mark’s; a fact which explains perhaps the emphasis of his condemnation of the “grotesque renaissance” of those buildings. The Casa Wetzler was afterwards known as the Palazzo Swift, and it is now an annexe of the Grand Hotel. This is the house

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which has the better claim to be considered Ruskin's principal Venetian home, for it was during the sojourn there in 1851-52 that he wrote the greater part of the second and third volumes of *The Stones*. The fame of the house in this respect is not hidden. I have heard of six young ladies who came down to the terrace of the Grand Canal one morning, each prepared to confide to the others that she was enjoying the unique privilege of occupying "the room in which Ruskin wrote *The Stones of Venice*." Landlords are obliging in such cases. Besides, Ruskin's *appartement* included several rooms.

Many years passed before Ruskin was again in Venice. His work upon Venice was, as we have heard, "bye-work," and during the years 1852-69 his main interests lay elsewhere. In 1869, however, he spent several weeks at Verona, and occasionally went over to Venice for a day or two at a time. It is not recorded where he stayed on those occasions. In the following year his Professorial work at Oxford called him to a resumed and closer study of Italian painting, and he spent some weeks in Venice, staying, as again in 1872, at Danieli's. Four years later came a longer and more important visit. He was in Venice from September 1876 to May 1877, and this was what may be called the second period in his Venetian work—the period of *Carpaccio*, of *St. Mark's Rest*, of the *Guide to the Academy*, of his appeals for the preservation of St. Mark's Church. From September to the beginning of February he stayed in the Ca' Ferro (the main portion of the Grand Hotel). He then moved into lodgings, at the "Calcina," on the Zattere. But the house which Ruskin inhabited was very different from the present building on the same site. Many visitors to Venice, if they had friends to put them on the inner track, will remember the "Calcina" of earlier

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days. It was a small lodging-house, with a restaurant attached. Ruskin liked the open situation, for the Fondamenta delle Zattere faces the broad water between it and the Giudecca; "commanding," as he found to his delight, "sunrise and sunset both." His two little rooms were on the first floor, so that he looked "along the water instead of down on it," and got picturesque views of the boats on the quay of the rafts. Many of his "pencil notes of composition," of which some examples are in the South London Art Gallery, were made at the Calcina. The restaurant on the ground floor had a side entrance, opening into a little courtyard, and there under a pergola of vines one ate one's humble meals. It was frequented, in the days which I remember, by artists and students, and one heard much talk of studios and effects, of Ruskin and of Whistler, and of Ruskin's faithful Bunney who had counted every brick in any corner which he painted, and believed that St. Mark's was built all up and down on purpose. The landlord had a pleasant word for every guest, and the perennial waiter (Tony, as I remember him) a recollection of one's favourite dish. This was the kind of lodging that Ruskin loved. He was free from the intrusion of hotel guests; free also to ride his hobbies in his own way. Count Zorzi, one of his Venetian friends, has recorded how one morning he found Ruskin in the court of the Calcina with a hatchet in his hand; preparing to execute summary justice, suggested the visitor, on the assassins of artistic Venice. "No, no, my dear friend, as you see, I am cutting wood. Allow me"—and he went on splitting logs for firewood with the greatest ease and naturalness.<sup>1</sup> It is the Calcina that has been selected by the municipality of Venice for its memorial inscription to Ruskin. A white oblong marble slab with a neat moulding on

<sup>1</sup> *Cornhill Magazine*, August 1906.

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the front of the rebuilt “Hotel Calcina” bears the following inscription :—

JOHN RUSKIN

ABITÒ QUESTA CASA (1877)

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SACERDOTE DELL' ARTE

NELLE NOSTRE PIETRE NEL NOSTRO S. MARCO

QUASI IN OGNI MONUMENTO D'ITALIA

CERCÒ INSIEMI

L'ANIMA DELL' ARTEFICE E L'ANIMA DEL POPOLO

---

OGNI MARMO OGNI BRONZO OGNI TELA

OGNI COSA GLI GRIDÒ

CHE BELLEZZA È RELIGIONE

SE VIRTÙ D'UOMO LA SUSCITI

E RIVERENZA DI POPOLO L'ACCOLGA

---

IL COMUNE DI VENEZIA RICONOSCENTE

P.

XXVI GENNAIO MDCCCC.

So much for Ruskin's homes in Venice. His working haunts were everywhere, but a few spots may be mentioned where he was fond of going for rest. One is a place familiar to all tourists—San Lazzaro, the island of the Catholic Armenian Convent. Every one knows the convent and its cloisters; its garden of magnolias and oleanders; its relics of Byron who there learnt Armenian as “something craggy to break his mind on.” Ruskin was fond of going there for quiet. He always felt at home, he says, with monkish friends, and he had none more valued than

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those of the lagoon-isle. Few, if any, survive, I suppose, who knew him in the flesh, but his memory is cherished still. In their library the priests have a copy of *The Stones of Venice* with an autograph inscription by the author hoping that he may sometimes be remembered by the good brothers ; and in the little Museum they have framed a letter of 1883,<sup>1</sup> in which Ruskin, in deploring some necessity for rebuilding, tells his old friends that they had really better leave Venice and come and build a nice monastery on an island in Lancaster Bay.

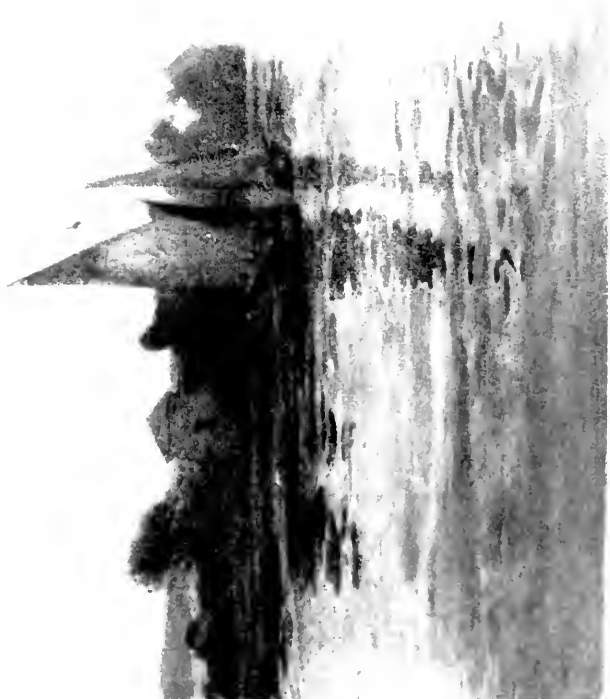
The prospect from the Armenian Convent is famous, and Ruskin sometimes pronounced it " the best of all views of Venice." At other times he gave the palm to a spot on the other side of the city. This is the island-church of S. Giorgio in Alga, which figures in sunset-effect in one of the plates of *Modern Painters*. It is given there as " a type of the kind of scene which was daily set before the eyes of Titian ; " yet, as he says in another passage, " the sun never plunges behind San Giorgio in Alga without such retinue of radiant cloud, such rest of zoned light on the green lagoon, as never received image from his hand." " The most beautiful view of Venice at sunset is," he says in *The Stones*, " from a point at about two-thirds of the distance from the city to the island." " If you tie your boat to one of the posts there," he wrote to Professor Norton, " you can see at once the Euganeans, when the sun goes down, and all the Alps and Venice behind you by the rosy sunlight ; there is no other spot so beautiful." It was a favourite haunt with Ruskin, and he often sketched the scene. It was one of the few spots in which, amid all his hard dry work in measuring and analysing, he never lost the feeling of joy ; and there, too, in his later visits to Venice, though the nearer view had then been much spoiled, he was never tired of

<sup>1</sup> It is printed in the Library Edition, vol. xxxvii. p. 462.





VENICE: S. GIORGIO IN ALGA





## VENICE

going to watch the sunset flame and fade. The Campanile has now gone, and the island has been tidied up by the building of an ugly brick wall around it. Our artist's drawing (Plate XXVI) was made, as far as might be, to suit some of Ruskin's descriptions. Another spot much beloved on his earlier visits was destroyed when the railway was made. This was the small shrine supported on a few mouldering piles which was dedicated to the Madonna dell' Acqua, and which the gondoliers seldom passed without a prayer. It is the subject of one of the better among Ruskin's poems :—

“ Around her shrine no earthly blossoms blow,  
No footsteps fret the pathway to and fro ;  
No sign nor record of departed prayer,  
Print of the stone, nor echo of the air,  
Worn by the lip, nor wearied by the knee ;—  
Only a deeper silence of the sea :  
For there, in passing, pause the breezes bleak,  
And the foam fades, and all the waves are weak.” . . .<sup>1</sup>

Another spot, very dear to Ruskin, has been doomed by modern progress. This is the Island of S. Elena which the visitor passes as he is rowed or taken by steamer along St. Mark's Channel towards the Lido. The island is now occupied by an iron-foundry ; the monastery and the gardens are destroyed ; and the church is a *magazzino da macchine*. In Ruskin's days it was one of the loveliest spots at Venice. He was fond of going there at evening to watch “ the last gleam of sunshine, miraculous in gradated beauty, on the cloister and the red brick wall within it.” He loved the quiet of its garden ; it was one of Shelley's “ lonely isles of desert sand,” and out of its dust Ruskin gathered the

<sup>1</sup> Among the *Juvenilia* printed in the Library Edition there is a description of the same spot in a prose piece (vol. i. p. 543) ; and, for once, Ruskin's verse is more adequate than his prose.

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little grey cockle-shell which introduces one of the most poignant passages in his *Fors Clavigera*.<sup>1</sup> I remember visiting the place a few years later ; owing my knowledge of it to the kind friend who to so many English travellers has opened doors into the beautiful and interesting and little known in Venice<sup>2</sup>—the friend of whose *Life on the Lagoons* Stevenson wrote :—

“ Now thanks to your triumphant care,  
Your pages clear as April air,  
The sails, the bells, the birds I know,  
And the far-off Friulan snow. . . .  
Perchance, reviving, yet may I  
To your sea-paven city hie,  
And in a *felze* some day yet  
Light at your pipe my cigarette.”

The island, though “ tangled and wild and left to itself,” was well loved in those days. It had been leased, I believe, to the Queen Margherita. At any rate it was her favourite haunt, and every day when she was in Venice she spent some hours there. I remember how the custode was on the alert throughout our visit to send us off in case the Queen’s gondola should approach. The cloister of the monastery opened into a garden, with pomegranate, and cassia, and roses. There was a swing, too, I remember, in the garden ; not for the Queen herself, said our facetious guide, but for the Principino (his present Majesty) with the General and the Majordomo to swing him.

To enumerate what I have called Ruskin’s working haunts in Venice would be to give an abstract of the Venetian index to his books and of the catalogue of his Venetian drawings. Only two or three spots can here be mentioned. We may picture Ruskin painting and describing St. Mark’s, “ with my six-o’clock

<sup>1</sup> See Letter 72.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Horatio F. Brown.

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breakfast on the little café table beside me on the pavement in the morning shadow.”<sup>1</sup> “Of all the happy and ardent days which in my earlier life it was granted to me to spend in this Holy Land of Italy, none were so precious as those which I used to pass in the bright recesses of your Piazzetta, by the pillars of Acre ; looking sometimes to the glimmering mosaics in the vaults of the Church ; sometimes to the Square, thinking of its immortal memories ; sometimes to the Palace and the Sea.”<sup>2</sup> Our artist’s drawing of the Ducal Palace (Plate XXVII) was made in the morning light preferred by Ruskin. “Something of what I did in Venice,” says Ruskin, “was due to my love of gliding about in gondolas” ; and we may picture him next as spending long days on the canals, stopping to sketch, to examine, to measure, whenever the architecture of a house or a church arrested his attention. Many long days he must have spent also in the Scuola di San Rocco, where in 1845 the genius of Tintoret first revealed itself to him. A glimpse of him in the same place, twenty-four years later, may be found in Mr. Holman Hunt’s autobiography. The old friends had not seen each other for some years. They chanced to meet in Venice in the summer of 1869, and they went together to look at Tintoret’s pictures. Mr. Hunt noticed that Ruskin, in talking about the pictures, seemed now more interested in the painter’s technique than in the imaginative and symbolic meanings which he had deciphered in the second volume of *Modern Painters*. But they turned to the book ; and Ruskin read out his old descriptions and found nothing in them which he would care to alter. “How many, I thought, would envy me,” says Mr. Hunt, “as I listened to his precise and emphatic reading of the ever memorable passages.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *St. Mark’s Rest*, § 88.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Count Zorzi : Library Edition, vol. xxiv. p. 408.

<sup>3</sup> *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, vol. ii. pp. 258-271.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

There is another shrine than the Scuola di San Rocco with which Ruskin's work at Venice is closely identified. It is "The Shrine of the Slaves," by which name he called the little chapel painted by Carpaccio for the Confraternity of the Slavonians—S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni. The chapel, so long neglected, is now included in every tourist's round; illustrated guide-books have been published; and the custode, so soon as English or American visitors enter, conducts them to the best points of view, and adjusts the window blinds to give the proper light for seeing all the humour and dainty detail which Ruskin first deciphered in Carpaccio's series of pictures. The better known and yet more charming St. Ursula series by the same painter is now beautifully arranged in a room in the Academy, for which also thanks are due to Ruskin; it was he who protested against the old hanging of them "out of sight, seven feet above the ground."

Venice has not been unmindful of the debt which she owes to the English writer who did so much to interpret her history, her architecture, her paintings. The English community itself, with the help of visitors now at home, has placed a memorial window to Ruskin in the English Church at Venice, the Church of St. George; it bears Ruskin's coat of arms and one of his mottoes, *Age quod agis*. The memorial tablet, set up by the municipality of Venice, has been described above. It may perhaps be regretted that a memorial should not have been placed in or near the Church or the Palace or the Square; but the inscription on the tablet upon the "Calcina" lacks nothing in felicitous appreciation. In 1905, on the occasion of an International Art Congress at Venice, a sitting was devoted to the commemoration of Ruskin. The discourse upon the English writer was delivered by a French man of letters in presence of the King and Queen of Italy. M. de la Sizeranne in his peroration introduced some remarks on the





VENICE: THE DUCAL PALACE





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rebuilding of the Campanile, and continued thus:—"To-day, however, you are engrossed with another monument. Your memory recalls the great figure of Ruskin to your imaginations, and from henceforth, so you will it, we shall meet that figure everywhere—at the threshold of St. Mark as at the Tower of Torcello, near the Madonna of the Garden as at the foot of the dead Doges of San Zanipolo. And this monument that you raise to Ruskin, immaterial as it is, has no need to fear the fate of the Campanile. Whatever earthquakes may befall, it will for ever appear clear, luminous to the navigator (and we are all navigators), to the men of the twentieth century who seek for a lighthouse and a port. Our eyes will see it—never. Our hearts will find it everywhere."

## CHAPTER IX

### CHAMONIX AND ST. MARTIN

“ Rise, O ever rise,  
Rise like a cloud of incense, from the Earth !  
Thou kingly spirit throned among the hills,  
Thou dread ambassador from Earth to Heaven,  
Great hierarch ! tell thou the silent sky,  
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,  
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God.”

COLERIDGE: *Hymn in the Vale of Chamonix.*

“ THIS, and Chamouni,” wrote Ruskin at Venice in his diary of 1841, “ are my two homes of earth.” He changed his mind about Venice, regarding his attraction to it as “ a vain temptation ” and his studies there as at best a bye-work, but Chamonix was through all his working years a centre of his life’s thought and a home of his heart. It was “ beneath the cloudless peace of the snows of Chamouni,” that he wrote in the Epilogue of 1888 to *Modern Painters* “ the final words of the book which their beauty inspired and their strength guided.”

Any reader who is acquainted with Ruskin’s Life and Work will know how literally true are these words. His first visits to Chamonix were in 1833 and 1835, and his early diaries, letters, and verses show the deep impression which the place made upon the boy. A penny selection of his verses recently published is not inaptly entitled “ A Walk in Chamouni—and other Poems.” Then it was at Chamonix, as he has told us in *Præterita*, that he received the impulse to write his first great book, and it was there that he most frequently collected material for its continuation.

## CHAMONIX AND ST. MARTIN

In eleven different years before *Modern Painters* was finished, he had passed several days or weeks at Chamonix. The chapters which their author deemed "the most valuable and the least faultful part of the book" are those describing "the sculpture of mountains into the forms of perpetual beauty which they miraculously receive from God"; and of those chapters the most exhaustive are concerned with the mountains of Chamonix. To mention the titles of some of the chapters and their illustrative plates will suffice to recall the contents to the reader's memory—"The Central Peaks," "Aiguille Structure," "The Aiguille Blaitière," "Cleavages of Aiguille Bouchard," "Crests of La Côte and Tacconay," "Aiguilles and their Friends." Such chapters with their "accurately abstracted and finally concentrated expressions of the general laws of natural phenomena" were founded upon observations, minute and prolonged, made during summers spent at Chamonix; and the plates engraved in the book were but a small selection from portfolios filled with drawings no less careful and elaborate. He had watched every movement of the clouds, and he carried with him apparatus for measuring the blue of the sky. He had walked with Couttet, the "captain of Mont Blanc," among all but the highest hills, and spent long days on the glaciers at the base of the Aiguilles. He had measured angles, collected minerals, and directed geological excavations. He had "weighed the minute-burden of sand in the streams." A large part of *Modern Painters* might be called "A Survey of the Valley of Chamonix"; and when Ruskin turned from nature and art to economics, it was again to Chamonix that he went for inspiration. "A score of books in political literature," says Lord Morley, "rank as acts, not books." Ruskin's *Unto this Last* has some claim to a place among the number, and it was written at Chamonix. The famous valley, in which Ruskin spent in all a

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portion of seventeen years of his life, may thus be reckoned as the most fruitful of his homes.

Ruskin's home at Chamonix in a more restricted sense was the Union Hotel—the old Union inn, be it understood, and not the present “Hôtel de France et de l'Union,” with its “ninety beds,” as Baedeker numbers them. “The actual village was done for to me,” wrote Ruskin in 1874 to his friend Mr. John Simon, “when Eisenkraemer—poor wretch—built the second Union with the cockney-garden.” The old Union had a long and honourable career, as may be read in the pages of Mr. Coolidge's *Swiss Travel and Guide Books*. The first inn was opened at Chamonix between 1765 and 1772 by a widow, Madame Couteran, who is highly commended by Saussure in 1779. The cleanliness of her beds and her excellent table were much appreciated. Next came the “Ville de Londres” or “Hôtel de Londres et Angleterre”; it was there that Shelley and his party stayed in 1816. The old Union—or “the new inn,” as it is sometimes called in guide-books of the time—was the third in date, and was praised, as early as 1824, for its “bains de santé et de propreté.” It was to this house that Ruskin went as a boy on his first visits to Chamonix, and in it, or its successor, he stayed in all the later years. In his rhymed “Tour through France to Chamouni” (1835) he gives a minute description of the hotel, outside and in. It had external wooden galleries well carved and ornamented all along, and these were then the favourite station of the guides—the “Alpine club room” of Chamonix, corresponding to the wall in front of the “Monte Rosa” at Zermatt. Inside there were three lobbies above each other with windows at each end. The lobbies made a good walk, Ruskin says, for exercise in wet weather, and in them were “pictures which are rather well executed or at least not bad, of ibex, deer, and chamois.” The description will recall to some



## CHAMONIX AND ST. MARTIN

of my readers the corridors of many an old-fashioned Swiss inn. From the lobbies "the bedrooms open clean and neat"; each in those days commanding an uninterrupted view; those at the end of the lobby nearest the mountains were occupied by Ruskin. Here he was always welcome, and always felt at home. "I have had no more true or kind friend," he wrote in 1874, "than the now dead Mr. Eisenkraemer of the *old* Union inn at Chamouni." The establishment is no longer in possession of the family, and Ruskin's name is not remembered there; but the additions and alterations to the building have chanced to spare his old room, and a guest at the hotel may see from it precisely the view which appears in some of Ruskin's drawings. Our artist's picture (Plate XXVIII) was taken from Les Tines, a little higher up the valley—a favourite walk of Ruskin's.

The precise identification of Ruskin's favourite haunts in and near Chamonix I have found difficult. Perhaps it is impossible, owing to the many alterations wrought in the valley by railway, buildings and other works; or perhaps it may yet reward some more pertinacious or fortunate pilgrim. The scene of one of Ruskin's haunts can indeed be identified, but it has lost its ancient charm. In the famous chapter on the Pine in *Modern Painters*, he says that "while lowland forest arches overhead and chequers the ground with darkness, the pine, growing in scattered groups, leaves the glades between emerald-bright." And then he continues thus:—"Its gloom is all its own; narrowing into the sky, it lets the sunshine strike down to the dew. And if ever a superstitious feeling comes over me among the pine-glades, it is never tainted with the old German forest fear; but is only a more solemn tone of the fairy enchantment that haunts our English meadows; so that I have always called the prettiest pine-glade in Chamouni, *Fairies' Hollow*. It is in the glen beneath

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

the steep ascent above Pont Pelissier, and may be reached by a little winding path which goes down from the top of the hill ; being, indeed, not truly a glen, but a broad ledge of moss and turf, leaning in a formidable precipice (which, however, the gentle branches hide) over the Arve. An almost isolated rock promontory, many-coloured, rises at the end of it. On the other sides it is bordered by cliffs, from which a little cascade falls, literally, down among the pines, for it is so light, shaking itself into mere showers of seed pearl in the sun, that the pines don't know it from mist, and grow through it without minding. Underneath, there is only the mossy silence, and above, for ever, the snow of the Nameless Aiguille." A note added by Ruskin to the reprint of this passage in *Fronde Agrestes* and a passage in Mr. Coolidge's edition of Murray's *Switzerland* (1891) identify the spot. "The new road to Chamouni," said Ruskin, "has been carried right through it. A cascade on the right as you ascend marks the place spoken of in the text—once as lovely as Corri-nan-Shian."<sup>1</sup> And "Murray" in describing the course of the new road after passing Le Fayet says : "The road now ascends into the ravine of the Arve. It is carried along a shelf cut out of a rocky slope. The *Restaurant du Châtelard* stands in a charming grassy glade, described in its primitive quietness, when it was far from any road, by Mr. Ruskin." There is now a newer road—that of the electric railway, and the Fairies have fled.

A yet more favourite haunt of Ruskin's, because nearer to his headquarters at the Union inn, was a spot on the lower slopes of the Brévent immediately above the village. Every one who has been to Chamonix knows the bold mountain that overhangs the valley on its northern side. It commands so fine a near view of Mont Blanc that the ascent of it is, as the guide-books ordain,

<sup>1</sup> See Scott's *Monastery*, ch. 8.



CHAMONIX, FROM LES TINES





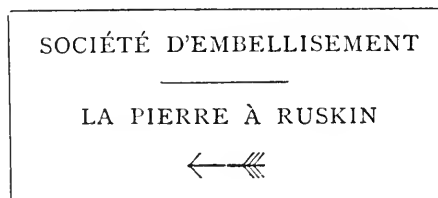
## CHAMONIX AND ST. MARTIN

“one of the indispensable excursions from Chamonix.” Ruskin often made the climb, and the chapter on “Precipices” in *Modern Painters* is largely founded upon observations taken on and from the rocky summit. The very best view, he says, and the halt and lame may be glad to know it, is, however, from half-way up, an opinion which Mr. Whymper confirms. But Ruskin’s habitual haunt, or haunts, may be reached with yet less exertion. I say “haunt or haunts”; for, in collecting the passages in which he refers to a favourite resting-place on the Brévent, I am not clear whether they all refer to the same spot. Sometimes he speaks of his “stone upon the Brévent,” sometimes of “the Fountain of the Brévent,” and the stone and the spring may be at different places. He was once asked by a lady-friend to give a list of his likes and dislikes; and in coming to places he wrote:—“If, for an affection, you want a narrower answer than Chamouni, I am a little puzzled between the top of the Montanvert and a small rock on the flank of the Brévent. I have been *happiest* on the Montanvert, but *oftenest* at this rock, where I generally pass my evenings when at Chamouni.” The stone is often mentioned in his letters and diaries. “I have been up to my stone upon the Brévent,” he wrote on reaching Chamonix in 1854, “all unchanged and happy”; and again to a friend who was there in 1879: “Please give my love to the big old stone under the Brévent, a quarter of a mile above the village, unless they’ve blasted it up for hotels.” Elsewhere he describes, as a spot where he was wont to rest at evening-time, “a mossy rock beside the fountain of the Brévent.” The passage is long and I can only quote a word or two from it here. It is one of the finest of the descriptive pieces printed for the first time in the Library Edition of his Works (vol. iv.). The “fountain” lies, we are told, “half way between the Prieuré and the hamlet of Les Tines, nearly

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opposite the foot of the Tapia ; the spring rises from the foot of a crag and the water winds glittering down the valley through a grove of birch and alder, catching, on a hundred pools, through the shuddering of their leaves, the quiet image of the frozen mountains and is lost too soon in the gigantic turbulence of the Arve." The passage is undated, but is connected with material collected for *Modern Painters*. Twenty years later (1874), upon revisiting Chamonix, Ruskin found the valley less spoilt than he had feared. "There is," he wrote however, "one accursed thing, but small ; built exactly, of all places, in the Brévent Fountain." Is the favourite "small rock on the flank of the Brévent" the same as "the mossy rock beside the fountain of the Brévent ?" Building has proceeded so fast on the mountain side since 1874 that it is difficult any longer to identify particular spots with certainty, but it seems more probable that two different places are described. The description "a quarter of a mile above the village" hardly accords with that of "the mossy rock half-way between the Prieuré (the main village) and Les Tines," though there are other respects in which the two descriptions agree well enough.

However this may be, local tradition has definitely connected a particular stone with Ruskin's name and memory. On passing the village church to the left, by the usual path to the Brévent, the tourist will immediately notice a sign-post thus inscribed :—



By following the arrow, repeated on further posts, the walker arrives presently at a large boulder half hidden among bushes ;



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the letters "Pierre à Ruskin" have been carved upon it. By way of further "embellishment," or to reward and refresh the tourist after the exertion of ten minutes' walk on a good mule-path, a restaurant chalet has been built near the stone, and a small terrace cut out of the mountain-side to serve as a tea-garden. There may formerly have been a "fountain" here also; there is certainly a trickling stream close by, though it is now partly conducted in pipes. In spite of the efforts of the Society of Embellishment, the tea-terrace, or still more a rustic seat nearer to the "Ruskin Stone," is a charming spot. Eliminate or overlook some of the new hotels in the foreground, and you command as fine a view of the valley and of the mountains as may anywhere be had at the same level. You face the Tapia, and the prospect is precisely that which appears in some of Ruskin's drawings of Chamonix. The efforts of the Embellishment Society are by no means wholly to be deprecated. Sign-posts and mountain-paths may be and often are as unobtrusive as convenient; but one could wish that the municipality of Chamonix had the power or the will—I know not which is lacking—to control the advertisement boards. They are a sad disfigurement to the meadows and the mountain sides. An extension of the "Scapa" movement to Switzerland and Savoy is much needed.

Ruskin had at one time or another many other favourite haunts. Of his fondness for the Montanvert, something has been said in an earlier chapter. He was never tired of watching the dawn or the sunset from that favoured spot. From a height above it, he loved to watch "the wild ranges of the Aiguilles Rouges relieved against the western sky."<sup>1</sup> Another spot more closely associated with him is the "Alp" with some chalets under the Aiguille of Blaitière—the Aiguille whose every contour

<sup>1</sup> See his letter in the Library Edition, vol. v. p. xxx.

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is familiar to readers of *Modern Painters*. Ruskin bought the land in 1863, including pasturage for twenty cows, "with entirely splendid rock and wood"; partly with the view of educating the mountain torrents, partly with that of making himself a house in his mountain home. He afterwards sold the land "on perceiving what ruin was inevitable in the valley after it became a tourist rendezvous"; but for some years he held the land, and thus became a proprietor in the valley with a right to share in its communal privileges of pasture and of wood.

When Ruskin speaks of Chamonix as "home," he must be taken as including its valley of approach. If Chamonix was "the throne," the Vale of Cluses was "the vestibule"; and sometimes the vestibule seemed even more glorious in Ruskin's eyes than the throne. "You, none of you," he said at Oxford, in describing Turner's drawing of the Aiguillette, a subordinate ridge of the Aiguille de Varens, "know the scene now, for your only object is to get to Chamouni and up Mont Blanc and down again; but the Valley of Cluses, if you knew it, is worth many Chamounis and it impressed Turner profoundly." There are few pages in Ruskin's works so charming as those in *Deucalion* and *Præterita*, in which he describes this "enchanted vale"; the Valley of Cluses, or the Vale of Magland, he calls it, meaning the upper portion of the valley of the Arve between Cluses and St. Martin. Below Cluses, which is but a few hundred feet above the level of the lake of Geneva, the river flows in a wide bed through a comparatively open country; but this country also, with the mountains on either side, was very familiar and very dear to Ruskin. At Bonneville in particular, formerly the capital of the Province of Faucigny, he was fond of staying. "I used to pass months and months at Bonneville," he says in describing



BONNEVILLE AND THE BREZON



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a drawing by Turner of the old town, "climbing among the ravines of the Mont Vergi." "The beauty of the hills," he wrote from Bonneville in September, "is unspeakable . . . the air soft, and like balm for sweetness ; the clouds dewy and broken in loveliest swathes and wreaths about the rock-crests."<sup>1</sup> The town, though greatly altered since Ruskin's days, has still picturesque features. The old inn at which he used to stay, the Hôtel des Balances, has been pulled down, but reminiscences of his sojourn there may still be heard in the town. They relate more especially to the Brezon, one of the two mountains—it on the south, the Môle on the north, between which the valley of the Arve lies at this point ; both mountains are the subjects of many drawings by Ruskin.

The Brezon (or the Pointe d'Andey as it is called in modern guide-books), rich both in mineralogical and botanical interest, was one of his favourite mountains, and he came very near to making his home upon it. He had spent much time, during his sojourn in Savoy in 1862-3, in examining its structure, and in his lecture at the Royal Institution on "The Stratified Alps of Savoy," he took the Brezon—*brisant*, breaking wave—as a typical illustration of the mighty wave-like action of the force that moulds gigantic rock-masses almost into breakers ready to nod and fall. Its structure has been explained in further detail by Ruskin's friend and pupil, Mr. Collingwood, from whose excellent work on *The Limestone Alps of Savoy*, I borrow this description of its charms :—"The long fold or wave-roller which reaches from Annecy to Bonneville ends in the Brezon ; and nowhere is it seen with greater completeness, for in all the other mountains which it forms much of the characteristic bend is obscured or broken away. But the Brezon, whether seen from Laroche or from the valley of Bonneville, strikes one first by the long roll of

<sup>1</sup> See the Library Edition, vol. xvii. p. xliii.

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its flank, and then by the double precipice and slope which make it most typical of Savoy. Not only of the geological structure is it typical, but of everything poetical in this land of romance. Seen from afar, the sweetness and strength of its rolling curves, sweeping slopes, or rugged crags, whether in time of snow or summer greenery, combine into a marvellous grace and majesty of form, harmonious as some perfect piece of Phidian design . . . the Parnassus of Savoy." "I'm greatly elevated in mind," wrote Ruskin to Mr. Collingwood, "at my pet Brezon being the Parnassus of Savoy." "A majestic, but unterrific fortalice," is Ruskin's own description, "of cliff, forest, and meadow, with unseen nests of village, and unexpected balm and honey of garden and orchard nursed in its recesses." He was so enchanted with the mountain that in 1863 he was in treaty with the municipality of Bonneville for its purchase, meaning to build himself a house on a ridge about 1000 feet below the summit; the negotiations fell through because the authorities concluded that the eccentric Englishman must have found a gold-mine or a coal-bed, and they raised their price on him accordingly. The gold-mine has not been found, but a carriage road has been made during recent years and there are inns on the mountain.

Ten miles above Bonneville we reach Cluses, from which point the Arve for several miles passes through a narrow defile—"forming," says Mr. Ball, "a worthy portal to the grand scenery that awaits the traveller who would approach its sources in the glaciers of Mont Blanc." This is what Ruskin calls the Valley of Cluses, "the closed valley—not a ravine, but a winding plain, between very great mountains, rising for the most part in cliffs—but cliffs which retire one behind the other above slopes of pasture and forest. . . . All this pastoral country lapped into inlets among the cliffs, vast belts of larch and pine cresting or crowding the

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higher ranges, whose green meadows change as they rise into mossy slopes, and fade away at last among the grey ridges of rock that are soonest silvered with autumnal snow. The ten miles length of this valley between Cluses and St. Martin include more scenes of pastoral beauty and mountain power than all the poets of the world have imagined ; and present more decisive and trenchant questions respecting mountain structure than all the philosophers of the world could answer ; yet the only object which occupies the mind of the European travelling public respecting it, is to get through it if possible under the hour." Ruskin was writing when the railway was only threatened ; it has long since been opened, and one may travel from Cluses to Sallanches (opposite St. Martin) in but half-an-hour's journey on the line of the P.L.M. from Geneva to Chamonix. Ruskin used always to walk the ten miles from Cluses to St. Martin ; and the existence of a railroad does not debar any pious pilgrim from doing the same. He may still rest awhile, with Ruskin, at the springs of Magland, where, close under the cliff, "the water thrills imperceptibly through the crannies of its fallen stones, deeper and deeper every instant, till within three fathoms of its first trickling thread it is a deep stream of dazzling brightness, dividing into swift branches eager for their work at the mill or their ministry to the meadows." He may pause again as he catches the sound of some harmonious chime of deep bells, remembering how Ruskin was once so enchanted by them that he intended to entitle a volume upon Pastoral Savoy "The Bells of Cluses." The whistle of the railway-engine may, it is true, interrupt the chimes ; but not so constantly as other noises in the earlier days of carriage traffic, when, according to Mr. Ball's *Alpine Guide*, the population of the valley seemed to live by firing small cannon and otherwise "dealing in echoes." Passing Magland, the wayfarer may pause

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to note the peak which is the termination of a range of limestone crags joining the Aiguille de Varens, and which forms a seeming pinnacle above the ravine descending into the valley of the Arve. It is the scene of Turner's drawing of "The Aiguillette," already mentioned, and Ruskin described it more than once. A little further on, we reach the Nant d'Arpenaz—one of the highest waterfalls in the Alps, descending from a rock of brown limestone remarkable for its tortuous stratification. A note on these twisted strata was the subject of one of Ruskin's earliest contributions to the scientific press.<sup>1</sup> To the beauty of the fall he often referred; one such passage is quoted below. As we pass Magland, the valley expands—on the left into the vast towers and promontories of the Aiguille de Varens, "a miracle of aerial majesty." I do not know if Ruskin ever climbed to its summit, but he had made careful studies of its geological features, and loved to ramble among its lower slopes in search of lilies, or to a favourite field of gentians.

Presently the valley opens yet wider, and the wayfarer, if favoured by the weather, enjoys at leisure a spectacle of which the railway traveller can at best obtain but a hurried glimpse. The view of Mont Blanc from St. Martin or Sallanches is, says Mr. Ball, "justly celebrated and is indeed in some respects unique in the Alps. The views of the higher mountains when not seen from a great distance are almost always gained from some narrow valley, where a limited portion only can be seen, or else from some ridge or summit that overlooks the intermediate valleys. Here, at the foot of the range of Mont Blanc, the valley of the Arve between the Vallée de Magland and the Val de Montjoie opens out in a broad basin with the entire west end of the range fully

<sup>1</sup> In *Loudon's Magazine of Natural History*, 1834; reprinted in the Library Edition of Ruskin, vol. i. p. 196.





ST. MARTIN : THE HÔTEL DU MONT BLANC





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in view, a fertile plain in the foreground, and the pine-covered heights that enclose St. Gervais filling the middle distance. In perfect symmetry, without the sameness that is the fault of human architecture, the summit of Mont Blanc occupies the centre of the picture. To the left is seen the Dôme du Gôuter, and the ridge connecting it with the Aiguille de Bionnassay, while beyond these are perceived the Aiguille du Midi and Aiguille Verte. On the right of the summit the Aiguille de Miage is conspicuous, and beyond it the peaks that connect it with the Col du Bonhomme. The glaciers of Bionnassay and Miage are seen surrounded by the formidably steep ridges that enclose their upper basins, and a great part of the way to the summit of Mont Blanc by what is called the St. Gervais route, and a part of the pass of the Col de Miage, may be traced in detail through the glass. It is true that the distance in a direct line to the summit of Mont Blanc is very nearly fourteen miles, but as it is raised 14,000 feet above the level of the valley, the angular elevation is as great as is compatible with a general view. The Monte Rosa as seen from the Val Anzasca is a more wonderful, perhaps also a more fascinating object, but for massive and stately grandeur this aspect of Mont Blanc surpasses all rivals. The view may be seen in perfection from the bridge close to St. Martin."

From what Mr. Ball says about the view from the Val Anzasca Ruskin would have strongly dissented: to him Monte Rosa seen thence was "a mere white heap, with no more form in it than a haystack after a thunder shower." In all that Mr. Ball says about the view of Mont Blanc from St. Martin he would have heartily agreed. And he claimed for it more than all that. He loved it not only for "the creamy, curdling, overflowing seas of snow," and for the aiguilles which stand sentinel beside them; but most for the combination with these of pastoral richness, for at no other

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point of the Alps does the region of the vine reach so near the central snow. "All that is wonderful," he said, "and for people who love pine forest and ice beautiful, in Chamouni, has rivalship or counterpart in other pastoral valleys of the Alps. . . . But there is nothing else in Europe like the valley of Sallanches; and the little Hôtel du Mont Blanc at the bridge of St. Martin was in old days the hermitage whence one might see whatever was mightiest in Alpine form, and rightly spell whatever legends were most precious on tablet of rock or scroll of cloud."<sup>1</sup> Of all his inn homes, Ruskin accounted the Hôtel du Mont Blanc at St. Martin "the most pathetic and sacred." He has given a beautiful description of the place in a chapter of *Præterita*, and every detail in it may be followed on the spot by a traveller who visits St. Martin to-day. The village is now off the beaten track, but it may be reached by a walk of ten minutes from the railway station at Sallanches. Accommodation is no longer needed for travellers, and the old Hôtel du Mont Blanc has become a house let out in tenements; but the building shown in the Plate (XXX) is not altered since Ruskin's day, save for repainting and some rearrangement of the old stable-yard. The village church shown in a second Plate (XXXI) is also untouched; and to-day, as in Ruskin's time, one may "lean on the deeply lichened stones of its low churchyard wall which enclose the cluster of iron crosses, floretted with everlastings or garlands of fresh flowers if it is just after Sunday." Fifty yards further is the single-arched bridge over the Arve, of which the lovely elliptic curve delighted Ruskin. The cross still stands above the parapet, as it may be seen in drawings of the spot by him and by Turner. "Of the rich confusions of garden and cottage through which the winding paths ascend above the church, neither line, nor word, nor colour,"

<sup>1</sup> Library Edition, vol. xxxv. p. 642.



ST. MARTIN: THE CHURCH





St. Mary's Church, 1907



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says Ruskin, "has ever given rendering"; and still less, I think, can painter with word or brush hope to match the brilliance of the meadows beside the Arve when in early summer the globe ranunculus is mixed in profusion with purple veitch and orchis, and the long grasses wave over clover, moon daisies, yellow pansies, scarlet poppies, scabious and every kind of wild geranium, making such a dazzle of colour that one lifts one's eyes with relief to the white peacefulness of the snows.

There is a spot in those meadows from which one may comprehend all the beauties of the place—the bridge, the rushing river, the flowery fields, the rich profusion of the slopes of the Varens, the yet richer prospect of green hills and farms above Sallanches, and behind them all the mighty range of Mont Blanc. The eye can comprehend it all, but hardly the attentive mind. There came a time in the bright day in early June of which I am thinking when one felt impelled, as it were, to cry "Hold, enough!" when the attention became exhausted from surfeit of beauty. Wiser, the companion sketching at my side, intent upon a selected space of vision! Ruskin himself has touched the point in the chapter of *Modern Painters* dealing with the wearableness of the imagination, and it is from this very neighbourhood, though on the opposite side of the valley, that he illustrates it. "I well recollect the walk," he says, "on which I first found out this; it was on the winding road from Sallanches, sloping up the hills towards St. Gervais, one cloudless Sunday afternoon. The road circles softly between bits of rocky bank and mounded pasture; little cottages and chapels gleaming out from among the trees at every turn. Behind me, some leagues in length, rose the jagged range of the mountains of the Réposoir; on the other side of the valley the mass of the Aiguille de Varens, heaving its seven thousand feet of cliff into the air at a single

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effort, its gentle gift of waterfall, the Nant d'Arpenaz, like a pillar of cloud at its feet ; Mont Blanc and all its aiguilles, one silver flame, in front of me ; marvellous blocks of mossy granite and dark glades of pine around me ; but I could enjoy nothing, and could not for a long while make out what was the matter with me, until at last I discovered that if I confined myself to one thing—and that a little thing—a tuft of moss or a single crag at the top of the Varens, or a wreath or two of foam at the bottom of the Nant d'Arpenaz, I began to enjoy it directly, because then I had mind enough to put into the thing, and the enjoyment arose from the quantity of imaginative energy I could bring to bear upon it ; but when I looked at or thought of all together, moss, stones, Varens, Nant d'Arpenaz, and Mont Blanc, I had not mind enough to give to all."

The Valley of Chamonix and its valley of approach have been much changed and spoiled since the days when they were Ruskin's homes and haunts. "The Valley of Chamouni," he wrote even in 1856, "is rapidly being turned into a kind of Cremorne Gardens." The conversion proceeded apace ; yet he often revisited his old haunts in later years, and found them scarcely less beautiful than before. The access of the railway has increased the building, and there are some spots which the electric-power stations have completely ruined. Yet on the whole the wonder is rather how little the essential beauty has been impaired. Nature's scale is there so vast that even the boldest and most ruthless of man's inventions sink into puniness. The degree in which railways disfigure mountain scenery is often exaggerated by travellers. Railways, for one thing, are roads ; and the poetry of roads has often been celebrated—as, for instance, prettily by Wordsworth in verse, and eloquently by Ruskin in prose. Many of my readers

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will remember, doubtless, the description (in the chapter "Of Turnerian Topography" in *Modern Painters*) of the "Pass of Faido" on the St. Gothard. "One of the great elements of sensation, all day long, has been that extraordinary road, and its goings on, and gettings about; here, under avalanches of stone, and among insanities of torrents, and overhangings of precipices, much tormented and driven to all manner of makeshifts and coils to this side and the other, still the marvellous road persists in going on, and that so smoothly and safely, that it is not merely great diligences, going in a caravannish manner, with whole teams of horses, that can traverse it, but little post-chaises with small post-boys, and a pair of ponies. And the dream declared that the full essence and soul of the scene, and consummation of all the wonderfulness of the torrents and Alps, lay in a post-chaise with small ponies and a post-boy, which accordingly it insisted upon Turner's inserting, whether he liked it or not, at the turn of the road." But may not a like element of sensation attach also, and in some respects in a yet greater measure, to an extraordinary iron-road? I protest that, if Turner had lived in a later age, "the dream" might have insisted upon his inserting a turn of the St. Gothard railway. Of course there are railways which do destroy the effect of scenery. Ruskin has mentioned some cases in his books, and every traveller can think of others. But there is some truth, I think, in the statement of a general principle which I remember reading somewhere: "Manufactures and mining are fatal, but means of communication never injury scenery in the broad sense." It is certain that railways in mountainous countries are often less conspicuous than roads. Already the railway up to the Montanvert inn leaves but few visible scars on the mountain side. The "Funiculaire Aerien" up the Aiguille du Midi, which was under construction when I

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was last at Chamonix (May-June, 1912), is more threatening, carried as it is on huge arches in a straight line up the mountain. Such a construction is as disfiguring as it is daring and useless. "Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains," said Byron. Will "the spirit of the place," with the mighty forces at its command, take an awful revenge some day, one wonders, upon such treason to its majesty? The enormous concourse of tourists in the popular months no doubt destroys much of the charm of Chamonix for those who love peace and quiet; but this may easily be avoided, if you are fortunate enough to be able to visit Chamonix in May. It is true, as the companion of my earlier travels wrote, that "the weather is then a little uncertain; but in August also the weather can be bad, and when it is bad it is very bad. True also, the 'Alpine rose' is not yet in bloom. But if there is none of its 'rubied fire,' neither is there any crowd of vulgarians to put it out. Mr. Ruskin somewhere describes how he was staying once at the Montanvert to paint Alpine roses, and had fixed upon a faultless bloom beneath a cirque of rock, high enough, as he hoped, to guard it from rude eyes and plucking hands. But he counted without the tourist horde. Down they swooped upon his chosen bed; 'threw themselves into it, rolled over and over in it, shrieked, hallooed, and fought in it, trampled it down, and tore it up by the roots; breathless at last, with rapture of ravage, they fixed the brightest of the remnant blossoms of it in their caps, and went on their way rejoicing.' That, of course, must have been in August. In May the less flaunting Alpine flowers, the verdure, the clear atmosphere—all are in perfection. The valley of Chamonix is in May practically deserted. Those who only know it as thronged by the cosmopolitan crowds of August and September would then hardly recognise it, so quiet and peaceful

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is it. The hotels have just opened, and there are to be enjoyed all the advantages due to the tourist hordes, with none of the drawbacks. You are not crowded out into a little back bedroom over the stables, but are given a spacious and parqueted apartment with a splendid view on to Mont Blanc. You are not obliged to look at the fire from a respectful distance behind a surly, sleepy crowd in the *salon*, but have a pile of logs set alight solely on your own behalf. You do not find the summit of every near hill covered with broken ginger-beer bottles and sandwich papers. The fat landlord stands smiling in the doorway to receive you. He welcomes you as we welcome the early birds, heralds of summer ; and taking you aside, informs you, rubbing his hands cheerily, that ' It is well *monsieur* has come, for the *chef de cuisine* has just arrived yesterday from Turin for the season.' You realise this important fact when, half an hour later, you sit down to dinner. Lucky mortal ! And all this grandeur is for you, and only you ! But there is another and a stronger inducement. All nature is then at her best. The low-lying pastures are not burnt up by the sun's rays ; the cascades are more abundant ; the air is clearer ; the freshly-fallen snow gleams more brightly ; the flowers are innumerable." <sup>1</sup> The meadows of Chamonix are not quite so lush in floral luxuriance, I think, as those of some other Alpine valleys (as, for instance, those on the French side of the pass of Mont Cenis), nor is its Alpine flora so rich as that of Zermatt. But the Col de la Forclaz, on the road from Chamonix to Martigny, is in spring-time a paradise for lovers of Alpine flowers. The sunny slopes beside the road, before one reaches the Col on the ascent from Trient, are studded with *Gentiana*

<sup>1</sup> "Chamonix in May," in Mrs. E. T. Cook's *From a Holiday Journal* (George Allen, 1904).

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*verna*. The blue of the flowers, like pieces of the sky come down to earth, is enhanced by clumps of yellow cowslips and by the brilliant green of the grasses lately set free from the snow. You welcome the halt at the top of the pass for the sake of the horses, as also for the view down the mountain side to Martigny and of the dim and mysterious valley of the Rhone below. The meadows, too, around the inn are full of forget-me-not, orchis, and anemone. But it is in the fields and on the hillsides at Argentière that all kinds of anemone seem to grow most happily. On a precipitous green slope beside the road just beyond the village pale heads of the *A. sulphurea* waved by thousands on a day which I recall in early June. We picked our way carefully among the many little streams which trickled down through them ; and further up the hill, on grass which had found no time as yet to grow green, because the snow had hardly left it, there were beds of the Soldanella, herald of the Alpine spring, raising on slender stalk its delicate grey-purple flower—that “ pensive, fragile flower (as Ruskin so beautifully describes it) whose small, fringed bell hangs down and shudders over the icy cleft that it has cloven, as if partly wondering at its own recent grave, and partly dying of very fatigue after its hard-won victory.” Here, too, grows in profusion by the edges of the stream one of the daintiest of early “ Alpines,” the *Primula farinosa*. Is there anything lovelier than a meadow where the pink trusses of this little flower make a rosy mist on the grass, and shade the bell gentian, whose dark blue “ deepens all, as if indeed the sound of a deep bell among lighter music ? ” And next, growing in the trickle made by the tiny streams over the higher rocks came the *Primula viscosa*—“ divine in the rock clefts, and set in dripping caves.” One need not go so far from Chamonix as Argentière to find such meadows ;



## CHAMONIX AND ST. MARTIN

and indeed he who visits Chamonix in May will soon understand how it was that there Ruskin, as he wrote to a college friend, first "got fond of flowers," finding them make the place "a Paradise" in spring.

To the deeper and more solemn thoughts which came to him among the mountains of Chamonix, many a page of *Modern Painters* bears witness. "A certain degree of reverence for fair scenery is found," he says, "in all our great writers without exception—even in the one who has made us laugh oftenest, taking us to the Valley of Chamouni, there to give peace after suffering." Perhaps not every reader will remember the description of Chamonix in *David Copperfield*: "I came into the valley, as the evening sun was shining on the remote heights of snow, that closed it in, like eternal clouds. The bases of the mountains forming the gorge in which the little village lay, were richly green; and high above this gentler vegetation, grew forests of dark fir, cleaving the wintry snow-drift, wedge-like, and stemming the avalanche. Above these, were range upon range of craggy steeps, grey rock, bright ice, and smooth verdure-specks of pasture, all gradually blending with the crowning snow. Dotted here and there on the mountain-side, each tiny dot a home, were lonely wooden cottages, so dwarfed by the towering heights that they appeared too small for toys. So did even the clustered village in the valley, with its wooden bridge, across the stream, where the stream tumbled over broken rocks, and roared away among the trees. In the quiet air there was a sound of distant singing—shepherd voices; but, as one bright evening cloud floated midway along the mountain's side, I could almost have believed it came from there, and was not earthly music. All at once, in this serenity, great Nature spoke to me." With

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what voice She spoke to Ruskin in his homes at Chamonix and St. Martin may perhaps be gathered best from his verses " Mont Blanc Revisited " :—

“ Oh! mount beloved! mine eyes again  
Behold the twilight's sanguine stain  
Along thy peaks expire.  
Oh, mount beloved! thy frontier waste  
I seek with a religious haste,  
And reverent desire.

They meet me midst thy shadows cold,  
Such thoughts as holy men of old  
Amid the desert found;  
Such gladness as in Him they felt,  
Who with them through the darkness dwelt,  
And compassed all around.”

## CHAPTER X

### MORNEX AND THE SALÈVE

"The silence that is in the starry sky,  
The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

—WORDSWORTH.

"I'VE lain down to take my rest at last, having rented experimentally a month or two of house, preparatory to fastening down post and stake ; but except as I used to come abroad, I come home no more." So wrote Ruskin in August 1862 from Mornex in Savoy ; and next to Chamonix, this is the place among the Alps which is most intimately connected with his life and work. The plan of fastening down post and stake for permanent residence in Savoy was, indeed, abandoned owing to his father's death in 1864 and to the duty of tending his widowed mother ; but at Mornex he lived with occasional intervals from August 1862 to May 1863. He had long entertained the idea of making a house for himself apart from the parental roof, and for many reasons he was drawn to Savoy. In August 1862 he began house-hunting in his favourite valley between Geneva and Chamonix, and he was attracted by the situation of Mornex. This beautiful village nestles on the sunny slopes of the Salève, on the side which turns its back upon Geneva and looks across the broad valley of the Arve to Mont Blanc. Sheltered from the north winds, basking in the morning sun, and in those days remote from high roads, though yet within easy distance of Geneva, the village was already a favourite retreat with comfortable and intelligent citizens of that town. Readers of *Amiel's Journal* will

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remember how often the Professor of Moral Philosophy at the Academy spent his Easter holidays at Mornex, finding comfort from the distractions of Geneva in its "pure, life-giving air," and attaining in its peaceful seclusion to that inner harmony for which he strove so constantly and so painfully. "Already," he writes in one place, recording arrival at Mornex, "I am full of a sense of well-being; I am tasting the joys of that contemplative state in which the soul, issuing from itself, becomes as it were the soul of a country or a landscape, and feels living within it a multitude of lives. Here is no more resistance, negation, blame; everything is affirmative; I feel myself in harmony with nature and with surroundings, of which I seem to myself the expression. The heart opens to the immensity of things. This is what I love! *Nam mihi res, non me rebus submittere conor.*" Another *savant*, M. Gaullier, Professor of History in the University of Geneva, had in 1861 recently died, and Ruskin found that his villa at Mornex was to let. This was the "month or two of house" which he "rented experimentally." He liked it so well that the month or two expanded into nine. The Villa Gaullier, however, soon proved inadequate to his comfort. The house itself is somewhat shut in, though its garden commands an open and glorious view. Ruskin had moreover a considerable retinue with him. There were Crawley, his servant, and Joseph Couttet, his guide, and Mr. Allen, his general assistant (joined later on by Mrs. Allen and children). Ruskin desired a room or rooms which, as he sat or dressed or lay in bed, would give him an open view; accommodation, too, ample enough to secure him undisturbed solitude when he wanted it. So he rented, in addition to the Villa Gaullier, a small cottage, close by, which commanded the uninterrupted view and which served as his *sanctum*. Ruskin has described with great minuteness the two



RUSKIN'S HOUSE AT MORNEX



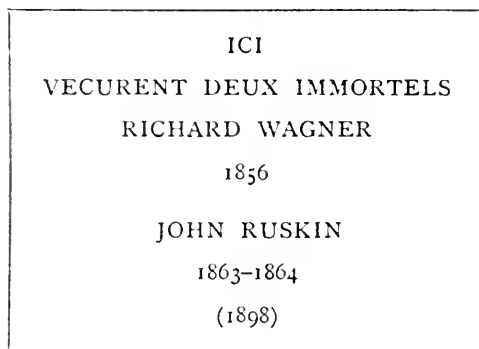




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houses, their gardens and the surroundings in letters which have been printed elsewhere.

Any pious or sentimental pilgrim may enter Ruskin's houses at Mornex to-day. He will be welcomed very cordially, for the two properties now thrown into one are a public hostelry. The Villa Gaullier—re-roofed, however—is the principal hotel (Plate XXXII). It is covered with wistaria, and the establishment is known as the “Hôtel et Pension des Glycines.” At the side of the hotel is a long terraced garden, at the lower end of which is the “cottage,” “summer-house” or “pavilion,” referred to in Ruskin's letters (Plate XXXIII). If your accent bewrayeth you as English, you will be invited, after taking your lunch on the terrace, to enter the “Pavilion of Ruskin.” If you are German or have sung over your wine, you will be invited to the same spot as the “Pavilion of Wagner.” For Richard Wagner, as we shall hear, was before Ruskin at Mornex. The front of the “Pavilion” is inscribed in memory of the most famous of its occupants :—



On either side of the inscription is a scroll ; that on the left being lettered “Tristan et Isolde, Les Valkyries” ; and that on the right, “The Seven Lamps of Architecture.” This latter

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lettering may, I suppose, represent the selection by the author of the inscription of Ruskin's most popular or most admirable work. From any other point of view it is curiously inappropriate. The *Seven Lamps* was written fifteen years before Ruskin visited Mornex; and architecture was the one of his many interests which occupied his mind least during his sojourn there.<sup>1</sup> The pieces written at Mornex were some geological papers and the "Essays on Political Economy" afterwards mystically entitled "Munera Pulveris." The inscription was unveiled with some ceremony in June 1898 in presence of the Mayor and other notabilities of Mornex. The Pavilion contains, on the ground floor, level with the garden terrace, a large double bedroom with a balcony in front, and a smaller room behind. It was in the front room that Ruskin slept during his sojourn, "dressing chiefly outside," as he says in one of his letters, "on the balcony"; and on the balcony, he was wont to take tea in the evening. His work-room and dining-room were in the main house, where he had shade and larger space. In "Ruskin's room" in the Pavilion a print of Mr. Hollyer's photograph of the master in old age is hung. There is a corresponding photograph of Wagner. Ruskin's bears the following inscription:—

"Robert Harvey, M.D., sometime Professor at the Geneva Gymnasium and lecturer at the Geneva University, has given this portrait to commemorate John Ruskin's habitation of this summer house in 1863—Mornex, October 1903."

Another frame contains an extract from *La Tribune de Genève* of June 9, 1898, describing the unveiling of the memorial inscription; a letter from Mr. George Allen giving the date of Ruskin's

<sup>1</sup> Curiously, architecture was the one subject to which the other immortal did devote himself at Mornex. "The only work I permitted myself," says Wagner in describing his days there, "was sketching plans for building a house." Wagner, like Ruskin, had schemes at this time for a hill-top home far removed from the noise of men.



MORNEX: THE PAVILION





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sojourn (wrongly, and the error is repeated on the inscription); and a note by François Bain saying that he was in Ruskin's employ at the time, and recalling that Ruskin had some trees lopped which impeded the view of Mont Blanc.

Ruskin's memory is, it will thus be seen, well kept at Mornex, and personal recollections of him still linger, or did till recently, in the place. Ruskin himself had revisited Mornex in 1882, twenty years later, and was delighted at finding himself recognised and remembered by some of the servants. "To my surprise and considerable complacency I found," he wrote to Mr. Allen, "that English people often came up to see where I lived, and that the landlord even knew that I always slept in the Pavilion! I asked leave to see the old room. It was turned into a bedroom, but otherwise it and its galleries remained unchanged." After a space of other twenty years and more, the older villagers still retained recollections of Ruskin. The hotel has recently changed hands, but up to a year or two ago the landlord, Mr. Corojod, formerly, I suppose, a servant in Madame Gaullieur's *pension*, entertained his guests with memories of "the two immortals." Wagner, he used to say, was "rather fierce"; Ruskin, "always gentle." In 1904 a distinguished French critic, M. Augustin Filon, who has made "studies" of so many notable Englishmen, was interested to find himself in Ruskin's House at Mornex, and he questioned the villagers. "A thin-faced, reddish-whiskered Englishman," they said, "neither old nor young." They did not know him as a writer of books; they remembered him as a benevolent eccentric. They used to see him messing (*tripotant*) about in his little kitchen; digging in his garden; mixing mortar, trundling a wheelbarrow, pottering about all over the place, never idle. In that far-off period, says M. Filon, Ruskin was practising his philosophy of the union between brain-work

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and hand-work ; the philosophy which in after time he taught his Oxford students when he turned them into navvies, to show them that a well-made road was a work of art. And it was Ruskin, continues M. Filon, "who put up the bell by which I call for my dinner, and who paved the courtyard ; every single stone of it was carried on the back of a diminutive donkey, Ruskin having devised this whimsical mode of transport as a means of disguising his act of charity to the donkey's owner, a very poor woman." Mr. Allen in conversation with me confirmed those recollections ; qualifying them, however, by the statement that it was he who did most of the paving.

M. Filon in his sympathetic and clever paper<sup>1</sup> claims too much for "Ruskin's House at Mornex" in saying that Ruskin there composed "the greater part of the pages published between 1855 and 1865." His sojourn at Mornex was, as we have seen, of much shorter duration, and the period was one of seed-time rather than of harvest in Ruskin's literary life. In a sense it were truer to say that at Mornex were sown the seeds from which sprung many of the pages published after 1862. Ruskin's sojourn at Mornex was a time of unrest with him—unrest, spiritual and intellectual. He settled there for peace and quiet thought ; these he found, and the hours of restful study and close contemplation which he there enjoyed may well have had their influence on later work. I know few spots which convey so completely the sense of vestal seclusion—"the world forgetting, by the world forgot." "All around me profound peace," wrote Amiel in his journal at Mornex in 1862 ; "the silence of the mountains in spite of a full house and a neighbouring village. No sound is to be heard but the murmur of the flies. There is something very striking in this calm. The middle of the day is like the

<sup>1</sup> In the *Figaro*, September 18, 1904.



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middle of the night, life seems suspended just when it is most intense." "I fancy," says M. Filon, "that the silence of Mornex is more profound than any other silence which I have ever tasted." Modern developments have done little to destroy this impression. Mornex is, indeed, becoming a health-resort of what I suppose will presently be called "the first rank." Already some of the advertisements describe it as "The Little Nice." It has large hotels, an Evangelical chapel, and an English church ; and whereas in Ruskin's time, it was, as he says, "at the end of carriage-roads," there is now a railway to it. But the configuration of the ground still makes for the feeling of seclusion. You alight at the tiny railway-station of "Haut Mornex," and wonder where the houses may be, for not a roof is visible. The village, you find, is built on terraces, and each is without sight of the other. You descend for five minutes by a winding and shady road, or by a steeper footpath, and you are on the terrace where "Ruskin's House at Mornex" stands. The two houses remain very much as he described them fifty years ago, except that, as aforesaid, they are now under one proprietor, and share the same garden ; rich both in shade and in sun. Trees have grown tall at the back since his time, and under their shade you may take your lunch. But in front is a sunny terrace, with roses tumbling over the wall that rises steeply above the road, and beyond, the view over the plain of La Roche to the distant mountains (Plate XXXIV).

To another of the "immortals," Mornex had some years before given rest and refreshment. Richard Wagner's sojourn in the actual Pavilion, inscribed with his name, seems, however, as we shall find, to have been for a few days only. In the summer of 1856, when he was writing the libretto of *Tristan* and the score of the *Walküre*, he was suffering from an attack of

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erysipelas and consulted a doctor at Geneva, who advised him to go to Mornex. "My first thought on arrival," says the master in his autobiography, "was to find a place where I should be undisturbed, and I persuaded the lady who kept the *pension* to make over to me an isolated pavilion in the garden which consisted of one large reception-room. Much persuasion was needed, as all the boarders—precisely, the people I wished to avoid—were indignant at having the room originally intended for their social gatherings taken away. But at last I secured my object, though I had to bind myself to vacate my drawing-room on Sunday mornings, because it was then stocked with benches and arranged for a service, which seemed to mean a good deal to the Calvinists among the boarders. I fell in with this quite happily, and made my sacrifice honourably the very first Sunday by betaking myself to Geneva to read the papers. The next day, however, my hostess informed me that the boarders were very annoyed at only being able to hold the service, and not the week-day games, in my drawing-room. I was given notice."<sup>1</sup> Wagner then looked about for other quarters, which he found with Dr. Vaillant, who received a few patients in his house at Mornex for the hydropathic cure. This Wagner underwent for two months, with complete success. "You merely need calming," the doctor had said, and the sedative air of Mornex doubtless assisted the cold water to work a cure. It is interesting to know that by way of relaxation the musician read Sir Walter Scott's novels. On his solitary strolls he took "a volume of Byron with him to read on some mountain height with a view of Mont Blanc, but I soon left it at home for I hardly ever drew it from my pocket." Ruskin would have pardoned the neglect even of Byron for the devotion to Sir Walter.

<sup>1</sup> *My Life*, by Richard Wagner, 1911, vol. ii. p. 645.



MORNEX: VIEW FROM THE TERRACE





## MORNEX AND THE SALÈVE

Mornex lies, as I have said, on the slope of the Salève, and the mountain behind him was a perpetual delight to Ruskin. There are few mountains in the Alps which better repay familiarity. It is rich in scientific interest—geological and botanical; it commands views of great variety and beauty; it abounds in opportunities for pleasant rambles. To Ruskin the geology of the Salève was of inexhaustible interest. “I don’t think anybody who goes to Geneva ever sees the Salève,” he says in *Præterita*; adding unkindly that “for the most part no English creature ever *does* see further than over the way; and the Salève, unless you carefully peer into it, and make out what it is, pretends to be nothing,—a long, low swell like the South Downs, I fancy most people take it for, and look no more. Yet there are few rocks in the high Alps more awful than the ‘Angle’ of the Salève, at its foot—seven Shakespeare’s cliffs set one on the top of another.” Ruskin’s comparison understates the height if anything, for the Salève, which to a careless observer seems so low, rises to a height of 3368 feet above the lake. He was fond of taking the Salève to illustrate the almost inconceivable conditions of force involved in the raising or depressing of great mountains. “You know,” he said in *The Ethics of the Dust*, “I was living last year in Savoy; my house was on the back of a sloping mountain, which rose gradually for two miles behind it; and then fell at once in a great precipice towards Geneva, going down three thousand feet in four or five cliffs or steps. Now that whole group of cliffs had simply been torn away by sheer strength from the rocks below, as if the whole mass had been as soft as biscuit. Put four or five captain’s biscuits on the floor, on the top of one another; and try to break them all in half, not by bending, but by holding one half down, and tearing the other halves straight up;—of course you will not be able to do it, but you will feel and comprehend the

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sort of force needed. Then fancy each captain's biscuit a bed of rock, six or seven hundred feet thick ; and the whole mass torn straight through ; and one half heaved up three thousand feet, grinding against the other as it rose,—and you will have some idea of the making of the Mont Salève." But how was it made ? Grant the required conditions of force, and the question remains in what precise way they were exercised ? The problem of the buttresses of the Salève greatly fascinated Ruskin. The buttresses on the north-west face are strongly lined with vertical fissures, and the explanation usually accepted among the Swiss geologists is that the fissures are bedding, raised into position during the tertiary periods. One of the interests which drew Ruskin to Mornex was the study of this and allied questions. He scrambled, as he tells us, day after day among the cleavages of the mountain ; he drew sections and examined every aspect. The conjecture to which his researches led him was that the appearance of vertical beds was owing to a peculiarly sharp and distinct cleavage at right angles with the beds, but nearly parallel to their strike. The illustrated lectures and papers in which he developed his theory are now collected in his Works,<sup>1</sup> and bear witness to the thoroughness of his geological study of the Salève. The other side of the mountain, that on the east, has also its geological interest. It is a gentle slope, covered with verdant pasture and sprinkled with houses, and the whole of this inclined plane, facing the Alps, is strewn with fragments of rock identical with that of which Mont Blanc, many miles distant, is composed. I remember Mr. Allen telling me how much interested Ruskin was in these erratic blocks. One of great size stranded near La Roche—containing 15,000 cubic feet of gneiss from the Mont Blanc range—he desired to purchase ; and Mr. Allen used to recall Ruskin's agreeable

<sup>1</sup> In vol. xxvi. See also W. G. Collingwood's *Limestone Alps of Savoy*, p. 100.



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surprise at finding that a citizen of Geneva had already bought it, so that its preservation might be secured. Ruskin was diligent too in his rambles with Mr. Allen in collecting minerals. To one stone—an amygdaloidal concretion of black and grey chalcedony, out of Jura limestone—picked up on the southern slope of the Salève, he attached particular importance. It was shown to illustrate a paper read to the Mineralogical Society in 1884<sup>1</sup> as an example of waved or contorted strata which are unquestionably produced by concretion and partial crystallisation, not compression or any kind of violence. He founded large conjectures on such cases, and threw out the idea that contortions in rocks might be a crystalline arrangement assumed under pressure.<sup>2</sup>

The Salève is also rich in rare plants, among which Mr. Ball in his *Alpine Guide* mentions *Arabis saxatilis*, *Hieracium andryaloides*, *H. glaucum*, and *Orobanche Laserpitii Sileris*. Fatal accidents have been known to occur on La Grande Gorge, the part of the mountain where the rarer plants occur. But one does not need to be a geologist or a botanist to find rich enjoyment in rambles upon the Salève. The path up the western face, by which it may most quickly be climbed, is steep, and is partly formed by steps cut in the rock and called the Pas de l'Echelle. This leads up through the gap in the mountain, separating the Petit from the Grand Salève, to the pleasant village of Monnetier. The climb thence to the top of the Grand Salève takes little more than an hour, if you hurry, but 'tis well to "leave our journey marge Ample for the wayside wonders." Ruskin's descriptions of the mountain's upper slopes, of which several may be found in the collection of his Letters,<sup>3</sup> were written in autumn and winter. He describes

<sup>1</sup> Library Edition, vol. xxvi. pp. 382, 523 (No. 46).

<sup>2</sup> See on this subject *ibid.* p. lxvi.

<sup>3</sup> In vol. xxxvi. of the Library Edition.

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in autumn, "the loveliness of its golden mossy turf with the gentians set at intervals of a square yard or so," and "the divine things, all day long, between autumn leafage, flying sunshine, and floating cloud;" and, in winter, he tells of himself as basking on the summit in sunshine in mid December, while Geneva below was buried in fog; or on a clear day in January delighting in "the white ripples of drifted snow," with the distant view of every crag sharply defined, and around him "the stillness of midnight with the light of Paradise."

Such descriptions may well bring Mornex into favour as a winter resort. I have been on the Salève only when the spring was passing into early summer, and the beauty of the place was assuredly not less. But how to rival Ruskin's descriptions? Well, there is a poet who knew the mountain in summer, and he may be called in to fill the need—describing for us how he—

"Climbed or paused from climbing, now o'erbranched by shrub and tree,  
Now built round by rock and boulder, now at just a turn set free,  
Stationed face to face with—Nature? rather with infinitude."

Towards the summit you reach the turf and "soft tread on velvet verdure"; but velvet shot with the varied colour of every flower of spring. My companion said that the wide grassy tracks reminded her in some way of the Berkshire Downs above my own country home; and Ruskin notes, I find, that "most of the Salève flowers have a sort of English domesticity about them, except only one"—now in fruit not in flower, as he in autumn had to say—"the infinitely delicate small-leaved, small-blossomed *Rosa Alpina* which covers the rocks in thickets as thick as our brambles; the common dog-rose mixed with it in quantities." The rambler on the Salève in early summer enjoys the richer feast of colour and of scent. Every kind of wild rose, from the deepest carmine to the snowiest white, perfumes the air from their little dwarf

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bushes on the rocky knolls ; lilies of the valley hide in the under-woods ; and orchises, columbines and pinks run riot among the grass in the more sheltered dells. As Mornex is the most restful of hill villages, so is the Salève, on the grassy slopes away from its gorges, the most gentle of mountains. On the slopes of most of the Alpine mountains, even in their greenest and most quiet corners, the impression of snow-storm and of cloud is never quite absent. On the Salève, as you lie upon its grassy glades, the dreams are all of soft winds and long sunny days. And the same impression is made by the view to the northward of the blue-green waters of Lake Lemman backed by the gentle slopes of the Jura. It is different when the last knoll is climbed, and the southern view unfolds—

“The triumph crowning all—

There's Salève's own platform facing glory which strikes greatness small,  
—Blanc, supreme above his earth-brood, needles red and white and green,  
Horns of silver, fangs of crystal set on edge in his demesne.”

Ruskin's complaint, above quoted, that nobody who goes to Geneva ever sees the Salève was hardly true in his time, though of course he had his own meaning in the word “seeing.” Many may look ; and yet few see as much as he. But even in old days the mountain was, with the Genevois at least, a favourite haunt. “The summit of the Salève,” says an old edition of Murray's Handbook, “is frequently scaled by the inhabitants of Geneva, who make picnic parties to enjoy the view,” and Amiel records excursions of a more serious intent made by the learned ; whilst as for Mornex Ruskin tells us in one of his books that he was finally driven away “because he could not endure the rabid howling, on Sunday evenings, of the holiday-makers who came out from Geneva to get drunk in the mountain village.”<sup>1</sup> The mountain

<sup>1</sup> *Time and Tide*, § 47.

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villages and the mountain are now still more frequented, for a network of tramways and electric railways has brought them within reach of all. Frequent advertisement enjoins the tourist "Ne quittez pas Genève sans faire l'excursion du Grand Salève," and a most delightful excursion it is. You can make a circular tour of the mountain. One leaves Geneva by the electric tramway to Veyrier, whence the footpath ascends. From Veyrier an electric railway ascends past Monnetier-Eglise to Monnetier-Mairie, now a "junction," as will presently appear. From Monnetier the electric railway climbs sharply to the terminus of Treize-Arbres. The journey thence from Geneva will have taken you an hour and a half. The terminus is a few yards below the chalets of Treize-Arbres, so called from the presence of a clump of trees, where, as also at the station itself, there is an excellent restaurant. A further walk of twenty minutes takes you to the summit of the mountain. On the return journey, if you are provided with a circular ticket, you take a different route at Monnetier junction; proceeding by a second electric railway which descends the eastern slope of the mountain, past Mornex, to Etrembières, whence an electric tramway conveys you to Geneva. If by an early start you leave yourself plenty of time, a pleasanter day cannot be spent. You object perhaps to the vulgarisation of the mountain by the electric railways, or to the crowd which may probably enough accompany you to the restaurant. Ruskin, I cannot deny, would have sympathised with such repugnances. Yet the objection may easily be over-strained. The electric railways at least make no noise or smoke; and so well wooded is the Salève that the scar which the building of them has inflicted on the mountain-sides is seldom perceptible. As for the tourist horde, it is also a herd, and is easily shaken off. I remember a day in early June. The little train was well filled. The restaurants were

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crowded. But a ramble of five minutes off the beaten track was enough to win solitude. None of the travellers except my companion and I made for the upland above Treize-Arbres—

“ A few enchanted hours  
Beneath the firs, among the flowers,  
High on the lawn we lay,  
Then turned again, contented well,  
While bright about us flamed and fell  
The rapture of the day.”

And in our long rambles on the mountain we encountered no human voices save a passing salutation from a friendly peasant. So, then, even in these latter days a wanderer, who will step aside from the more beaten paths, may find the same peace and solitude that are described in Ruskin's letters from Mornex.

Nor is Ruskin's the only companionship which a literary pilgrim may have with him on the Salève. The mountain is associated also with one of the great Victorian poets, from whose descriptions I have quoted on preceding pages. In 1877 Robert Browning and his sister spent the summer with their friend Miss Egerton Smith, at the foot of the Salève at a house called “ La Saisiaz ” (Savoyard for “ The Sun ”). “ How lovely this place is,” he wrote in August, “ in its solitude and seclusion, with its trees and shrubs and flowers, and above all its live mountain stream which supplies three fountains, and two delightful baths, a marvel of delicate delight framed in with trees—I bathe there twice a day—and then what wonderful views from the chalet on every side ! Geneva lying under us, with the lake and the whole plain bounded by the Jura and our own Salève . . . the peace and quiet move me most.”<sup>1</sup> The peace and quiet were to be broken sadly.

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, by Mrs. Sutherland Orr, pp. 314-15. The passage quoted above explains several allusions in the early pages of *La Saisiaz*.

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Miss Egerton Smith died suddenly from heart disease in the act of preparing for an ascent of the mountain with the poet, the words still almost on her lips, as Mrs. Sutherland Orr says, in which she had given directions for the expedition. "Mr. Browning's impressionable nervous system was for a moment paralysed by the shock. It revived in all the emotional and intellectual impulses which gave birth to *La Saisiaz*." The poem is remarkable for its directness and sustained energy of diction, and abounds in lines revealing brilliant keenness of observation ; but it is the intellectual impulse, the ratiocinative rather than the purely poetic element, that is most marked in it. The setting of the piece is, however, very beautiful, and the more concerns us here. The poet resolves to make the ascent alone :

"Dared and done : at last I stand upon the summit, Dear and True !  
Singly dared and done ; the climbing both of us were bound to do.  
Petty feat and yet prodigious : every side my glance was bent  
O'er the grandeur and the beauty lavished through the whole ascent.  
Ledge by ledge, out broke new marvels, now minute and now immense ;  
Earth's most exquisite disclosure, heaven's own God in evidence.

. . . I fulfil of her intents

One she had the most at heart—that we should thus again survey  
From Salève Mont Blanc together. Therefore,—dared and done to-day,  
Climbing,—here I stand : but you—where ? ”

And the spirit of the place impelled him without fear or favour to probe the question. His answer forms the main part of the poem, which he composed afterwards in London :—

“Not so loosely thoughts were linked,  
Six weeks since as I, descending in the sunset from Salève,  
Found the chain, I seemed to forge there, flawless till it reached your grave,—  
Not so filmy was the texture, but I bore it in my breast  
Safe thus far. And since I found a something in me would not rest  
Till I, link by link, unravelled any tangle of the chain,  
—Here it lies, for much or little.”

## MORNEX AND THE SALÈVE

For much, as many students of Browning must consider ; since, as one of the closest of them has said, it gathers up into words of direct statement threads of reasoning traceable throughout the poet's work.

Ruskin on the Salève found peace and consoling beauty ; yet the peace, as he wrote to a friend, was " only as if I had buried myself in a tuft of grass on a battlefield wet with blood, for the cry of the earth about me is in my ears continually ; " and the deepest thoughts which came in his mountain solitude were of burning pity for the inequalities of human fortune. And Browning, too was not insensible of the beauty in " the clustered wilding apple," " the pink perfection of the cyclamen," " the rose-bloom o'er the summit's front of stone ; " yet the inspiration which he found on the Salève was towards reasoning of God and the soul, of the life that is here, of the life that may be to come, of uncertainty as a necessary condition of probation.

" Great things are done when men and mountains meet ;  
These are not done by jostling in the street."

## CHAPTER XI

### OXFORD

“ Still on her spire the pigeons hover ;  
Still by her gateway haunts the gown ;  
Ah, but her secret ? You, young lover,  
Drumming the old ones forth from town,  
Know you the secret none discover ?  
Tell it—when you go down.”  
—“ Q ” (*From a Cornish Window*).

THERE sings the true lover of Oxford and of undergraduate life. Ruskin in due time became attached to Oxford ; it was for some years one of his homes, and there are many places in the University and around it which are associated with his name and fame. But I cannot find that as an undergraduate he was susceptible to the fascination of the place, and I do not know of any Oxford haunts that can be connected with the young Ruskin. In his old age he wrote, indeed, a beautiful and stately piece in praise of “ Christ Church Choir ” as it was in his undergraduate days ; but there is nothing to show that at the time his affection was fixed in fond companionship on any favourite haunts. With some the dearest memories of Oxford are of the cricket-field or the boating river ; with others of long days above Godstow or on the Cherwell, by water or in the fields, with a chosen friend and a favourite book :—

“ What strolls through meadows mown of fragrant hay,  
On summer evenings by smooth Cherwell stream,  
When Homer’s song, or chaunt from Shelley’s lay,  
Added new splendour to the sunset gleam.”

The stones of Oxford and the walks around it are rich in such



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association with famous men. Every passing visitor is shown the walk at Magdalen where "Addison pursued his quiet themes." Who can cross Magdalen Bridge without recalling how Shelley stopped a woman with a child in her arms to ask "Will your baby tell us anything, Madam, about pre-existence?" But it is Shotover Hill that is most closely connected with Shelley's undergraduate days, for the site of his "fairy garden," the scene of an adventure told in Hogg's delightful pages, has not, I think, been identified. At a pond formed by the water which had filled an old quarry on Shotover, the young poet would linger until dusk, gazing in silence on the water, or repeating verses, and sailing paper boats. Other associations cluster in Bagley Wood. There Burne-Jones, for instance, was wont (Mr. Mackail tells us) to spend whole days making minute and elaborate studies of flowers and foliage. And, of a lesser man, how pleasant, how characteristic of the romance of undergraduate life, is this reminiscence following! "I went the other day," wrote Augustus Hare from Oxford in May 1853, "with Troutbeck, a friend of whom I see much, to Bagley Wood where he sang old ballads under the trees upon a bank of bluebells and primroses." Of another, and more eminent man than the Precentor, it is recorded that he was stopped by a gamekeeper in Bagley Wood. "I was getting a few primroses." "Primroses! you be after the pheasants' eggs; I know you." It used to be said in my time that the trespasser was Dr. Liddon; but the story is one of Oxford's perennials, and I daresay it is now applied to some divine of the present day. Very charming, too, are the memories which cling around Boar's Hill. "My first companion in these wilds, as then they were," writes the author of *A Year with the Birds*, "was a vigorous walker whose books on Roman Society have won him an honoured name of recent years; we thought he had been the first to discover the hill, and he used

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

to pronounce its name—he was an Irishman—with a peculiar tenderness that still lingers in the memory. But more especially I associate the hill with a young scholar, almost morbid in his desire to get away from his kind, who would linger with me about the slopes for more than half a Sunday, listening to the nightingales on the sunny side of Foxcombe, or lying on the grass saying little, and watching the red-backed shrikes on the fence in front of us.”<sup>1</sup> There are no such touches of favourite haunts in the records of Ruskin’s life at Christ Church. In his Letters on “The Oxford Museum” he recalled indeed a sunny afternoon of spring when Ehrenberg, Acland and he went hunting for infusoria in Christ Church meadow streams, and in *Præterita* there is a passing reference to a walk with Acland beside the Cherwell. But that is all. He complains that Oxford did not so much as tell him where fritillaries grew, a lament that may be taken perhaps as an allusive indication that the ground loved by Matthew Arnold and “Thyrsis” was to him unfamiliar; though on a visit to Oxford some years later, he speaks of “getting away in the evenings into the hayfields about Cumnor.”

The fact is that for various reasons which I have explained elsewhere<sup>2</sup> the young Ruskin felt little of the charm of Oxford and was not in a position to learn “the secret.” It is discovered only to the free abandonment of happy youth and friendship; and Ruskin was too much in domestic tutelage. He is perhaps the only gentleman-commoner who ever resided at Christ Church with a mother keeping watch and ward continuously; though, to be sure, it stands recorded, as Lord Rosebery tells us, that when the younger Pitt went as an undergraduate to Cambridge, he was accompanied by a nurse. Of the tutelage by Ruskin’s

<sup>1</sup> W. Warde Fowler, in *The Oxford Country*, (1912) p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Ruskin*, vol. i. p. 64.

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mother, our illustration (Plate XXXV) is incidentally a record. It shows the interior of one of the old panelled rooms in the High Street, No. 90, where Ruskin's mother lodged throughout his residence as an undergraduate, and where every day he went home to tea. Ruskin's own rooms in Christ Church were first in Peckwater quadrangle, looking on to the Library; on which staircase I am unable to say. Afterwards he was moved to Tom Quad (first floor left, No. 4); and for his last term he was in lodgings somewhere in Aldate's.

A generation later Ruskin returned as Professor to the University, which then for some years became one of his constant homes; but already in the interval he had made his mark upon the Stones of Oxford. The "battle of the styles" was raging furiously in the 'fifties, and there was a sharp engagement at Oxford in connexion with the building of the Science Museum. I have told the story of it fully elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> and here it will suffice to say that Ruskin threw himself enthusiastically into the Gothic cause, that the victorious Gothic architect was his friend, that he was constant in advice and suggestion, that he contributed to the cost of the decoration, and that he designed one of the windows and some minor details himself. Miss Acland has in her possession several drawings made by Ruskin for the windows; the one which was executed from his design is on the first floor next, on the spectator's left, to the centre of the building. He also designed some iron brackets for the roof, and is said to have built one of the brick columns with his own hands. Sir Henry Acland "used to show it with great pride to visitors at the Museum; but legend relates that the workmen found it necessary to demolish the column and reconstruct it by less eminent hands."<sup>2</sup> And this seems likely enough, for in describing his

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Ruskin*, vol. i. chap. xxii.

<sup>2</sup> *Atlay's Memoir of Sir Henry Acland*, p. 223.

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studentship in various manual crafts, he says that the instrument he finally decided to be the most difficult of management was the trowel. "For accumulated months of my boy's life I watched bricklaying and paving; but when I took the trowel into my own hand, abandoned at once all hope of attaining the least real skill with it, unless I gave up all thoughts of any future literary or political career."<sup>1</sup> Opinions vary as to the general effect of the building, but competent critics will agree, I think, with Mr. Eastlake that "it exhibits in its details far more originality and grace than were to be found in most contemporary examples of secular Gothic." M. Taine disliked it. "Gothic," he writes, "in staring brick, with pointed roof and ugly little cupolas like extinguishers, the roof, tiled blue and red alternately, giving a most unsatisfactory effect. Mr. Ruskin, who is a professor here, directed the construction of this museum; his books are better than his buildings." M. Taine somewhat exaggerates the Professor's share in the work, which in many respects fell far short, in the execution, of what Ruskin had suggested, hoped and pleaded for.<sup>2</sup> He himself specially disliked the "common brickbats." It is in the decoration of the interior that Ruskin's influence and teaching are most marked. "The chief artistic glory of the University Museum," wrote Sir Henry Miers during his directorship,<sup>3</sup> "is the series of sculptured capitals which crown the columns surrounding the Central Court. The columns themselves, both in the upper and in the lower corridor, are a unique set of polished shafts, 126 in number, made from British marbles and rocks; the materials were carefully selected and arranged by Professor Phillips. The capitals on the ground floor were carved by Irish workmen, among whom the family of the O'Sheas appear

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 197.

<sup>2</sup> See *Life of Ruskin*, vol. i. pp. 452-54.

<sup>3</sup> *The New Carvings at the University Museum*, by Henry A. Miers.



OXFORD: NO. 90 HIGH STREET (INTERIOR)







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to have been sculptors of real genius. They made their carvings from nature, using plants, flowers and foliage supplied from the Botanic Garden, and the result of their labours is a fine series of sculptures, which have always excited the admiration of visitors. It was intended to carve upon these capitals representatives of all the natural orders of botany. The spirit in which this decorative work was conceived is indicated by a letter written by Mr. Ruskin to Sir Henry Acland in 1859, in which he says : ' The Oxford Museum is, I believe, the first building in this country which had its ornamentation in any telling parts trusted to the invention of the workmen ; ' and again, ' your museum is literally the first building raised in England since the close of the fifteenth century, which has fearlessly put to new trial this old faith in nature, and in the genius of the workman who gathered out of nature the materials he needed.' The work was, however, left unfinished for lack of funds. After the completion of the thirty capitals on the ground floor, and sixteen on the upper floor in the west corridor, the work was abandoned, and for forty-five years the remaining eighty capitals stood as mere blocks, unsightly loads upon the beautiful marble shafts." During the last seven years (1905-1912), the work has been resumed and it is now approaching completion. In 1905 the Rev. H. T. Morgan, of St. Margaret's, Lincoln, who had watched the O'Sheas at work when he was an undergraduate at Trinity, wrote to Professor Miers expressing his desire to continue some part of the long-abandoned carving at his own expense. The offer was accepted by the University, and Professor Miers presently issued an appeal for further subscriptions. " The University," he pointed out, " possesses no fitting memorial of Professor Ruskin ; there may be many who might like to help in finishing a noble piece of work which was near to his heart and was mainly due to his

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

inspiration, and to make the sculptural decoration of the Museum a lasting monument to his memory." Several subscriptions were forthcoming, and Mr. Morgan, who died a year or two later, bequeathed a sum of money sufficient to secure the completion of the work. A visitor to the Museum will find an inspection of the capitals in the upper corridor full of interest. The carving has been entrusted to two skilled workmen, Messrs. Mills and Holt, sent down by Messrs. Farmer & Brindley. Professor Miers was fortunate enough to find the rough notes made by Professor Phillips, indicating the name of the plant-order intended to crown each column, so that the original scheme, planned at the time when the Museum was being built, is being carried out. In the west corridor, the difference between the new work and the old will be detected in a moment, and the new is infinitely better. The previously carved capitals, corbels and spurs are, as Professor Miers truly said, so crude that the subjects can scarcely be recognised, and some are mere conventional designs. The new work, among which, in this part of the arcade, the Periwinkle (column 40), and the Jasmine (37) may specially be mentioned, is admirable in its free-hand and naturalistic carving. When the work is completed, a Guide or List will doubtless be printed; meanwhile I may note here some of the new work which, as I walked round the corridors, struck me as particularly good:—Begonia (115), American currant (107), dog-rose (105), vine (100), citrus decumana (97), mallow (92), magnolia (80), nutmeg-tree (73). Much of the carving on the piers is also excellent, the sculptor having ingeniously used his space so as to illustrate successively the blossom and the fruit (as with the pomegranate and the plum). The work thus noticed is by Mr. Mills; of the skill of Mr. Holt, an admirable specimen is the fritillary on column 126 (on the staircase). On a recent visit I

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had the good fortune to be able to see on the spot Mr. Mills's method of work, and to have some conversation with him. The Botanic Garden has throughout, I learnt, lent willing aid to the Museum, and Mr. Mills was carving with a living plant beside him, having first made a careful drawing from it. The particular plant on which he was then engaged was somewhat drooping, and the botanical library had furnished the sculptor with good plates of the plant for the better study of details. "When one stands beside the sculptors," wrote Professor Miers, "it is easier to realise their skill, for one then sees that the stone of the capitals in the upper corridor is not the soft, fine-grained Caen stone which the O'Sheas had for their work in the court below, but the comparatively coarse and uneven Taynton stone, which is ill-fitted for such delicate carving." Mr. Mills had a good deal to say on this point in the same sense, but I was not at all sure that the difficulty had not been an artistic blessing in disguise. It seemed to me that the new work in the Taynton stone had, in part from the very nature of the material, a vigour and free-hand directness, beside which even the excellent work of the O'Sheas below appears somewhat conventional. The bases of the upper columns, however, are of Caen stone, and the new workmen are making fine use of it in carving according to their fancy, but from nature, four little leaves as spurs at the corner of each base. These spurs reward careful examination; they are admirable examples of decorative, and yet naturalistic, sculpture. A visit to the Oxford Museum at this time is indeed like a chapter of Ruskin's *Two Paths* in real life. "All the wide world of vegetation," he said in that book to the architectural sculptor, "blossoms and bends for you; the leaves tremble that you may bid them be still under the marble snow; the thorn and the thistle, which the earth casts forth as evil, are to you the kindest servants; no dying petal,

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nor drooping tendril, is so feeble as to have no help for you ; no robed pride of blossom so kingly, but it will lay aside its purple to receive at your hands its pale immortality." " The law which it has been my effort chiefly to illustrate," he says again, " is the dependence of all noble design, in any kind, on the sculpture or painting of Organic Form. This is the vital law ; lying at the root of all that I have ever tried to teach respecting architecture or any other art. It is the law most generally disallowed." But it is the law which is governing the completion of the carvings in the Oxford Museum. Mr. Mills talked to me of the interest he found in his work, contrasting it with his former experience in carving for church decoration a limited number of more or less conventionalised stock subjects. As he talked, I thought of Ruskin's " On the Nature of Gothic Architecture ; and herein of the True Functions of the Workman in Art."

The Museum is closely connected with Ruskin's Professorship at Oxford, for nearly all his lectures were delivered in its theatre. It is beyond the scope of this volume to tell the story of his work at Oxford ; that has been fully done elsewhere. My purpose here is only to describe his " homes and haunts " during residence at Oxford from 1869-78, and 1882-84. His first home was with his dear and almost life-long friend Professor Acland in Broad Street ; the house has now been acquired by the University for its School of Geography. Ruskin " used to say that he could write unusually well there in his room, a quiet one at the back, as Mrs. Acland—' Mama ' he called her—made him so extremely comfortable, and he had nothing to disturb him, for he could not waste his time looking out of the windows, since the outlook over the blank brick wall and the chimney-pots was the ugliest that he had ever seen." <sup>1</sup> He was not always thus driven in upon

<sup>1</sup> Atlay's *Memoir of Sir Henry Acland*, p. 383.

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work immediately in hand by the dreariness of views from his window. He was fond, during his first year at Oxford, of seeking seclusion at Abingdon. He stayed at the "Crown and Thistle," and readers of *Fors Clavigera* will remember some pages of discursive diatribe suggested by the view from his window in that inn—a view, principally, of "a wall, of ornamental pattern, imitative in brick of wood-work (as, if it had been of wood-work, it would, doubtless, have been painted to look like brick)."

Near Abingdon there is a spot which bears Ruskin's name and embodies one of his ideals. One of the good friends of his later years was Mr. Henry Willett, of Brighton; a man of many tastes and large generosity. One of Ruskin's ideals was the establishment of reserves or *enclaves*. The fifth article in the Creed which he drew up for the companions of his "Guild of St. George" is in these terms:—

"I will not hurt any living creature needlessly, nor destroy any beautiful thing, but will strive to save and comfort all gentle life, and guard and perfect all natural beauty, upon the earth."

And in one of his lectures he expressed the hope that some day it would occur to rich men to "enclose for themselves a park, and space of various kinds of ground, in free and healthy air, in which there should be a perfect gallery, Louvre, or Uffizi, not of pictures, as at Paris, nor of statues, as at Florence, but of living creatures of all kinds, beautifully kept, and of which the contemplation should be granted only to well-educated and gentle people who would take the trouble to travel so far, and might be trusted to behave decently and kindly to any living creatures, wild or tame." A few years after Ruskin's death something of this kind was done by the presentation to the National Trust of a

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portion of Wicken Fen near Cambridge. "I should like to do something of the kind for Oxford," said Mr. Willett on hearing of it. A suitable plot of ground—about one and three-quarter acres of virgin soil, undisturbed by man, and rich in interest for the naturalist—was suggested at Cothill near Abingdon. Mr. Willett purchased it, and presented it to the Ashmolean Natural History Society, stipulating only that the name of John Ruskin should be associated with the ground. "Subsequently the remaining portion of the property, amounting to nearly three acres, came into the market, and the Society purchased it, thus securing a pretty piece of woodland, as well as protecting more completely the *Ruskin Reserve*." Mr. Druce, from whose paper in the *Oxford Magazine*<sup>1</sup> I have just quoted, has given an account of the various botanical species to be found on the domain, where, he adds, "the scenic effects are always pleasing in the combination of woodland, water and marsh, not separated by any abrupt line of demarcation or fenced by hideous barriers, but melting insensibly into each other." I notice among Mr. Druce's list of plants the *Pinguicula*—a fortunate occurrence, for it was a favourite with Ruskin, who has devoted a chapter to it in his *Proserpina*. I doubt if any memorial would have given so much pleasure to Ruskin as this reserve, presented by a faithful friend, cared for by an Oxford Society in which he was once much interested, and situated near Abingdon in country familiar to him.

In April 1871, Ruskin was admitted to an Honorary Fellowship at Corpus, and was allotted rooms in the college. "Mr. President," he said at the ceremony of admission, "I would not have left *Ædes Christi* for anything less than *Corpus Christi*." The President (Dr. Norris), failing to catch the point about the House

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in Mr. R. T. Günther's collection entitled *The Oxford Country* (1912).

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and the Body of Christ, is said to have “hoped Professor Ruskin found his rooms comfortable.”<sup>1</sup> The window of the principal room, commanding a fine view over Christ Church meadows to the river, is shown in our artist’s drawing (Plate XXXVI). It is on the first floor, the third window on the right. The rooms are on No. 2 staircase, right. Of the contents of his rooms, I find this description in an old number of *The Pelican Record* (the Corpus magazine) :—“During a prolonged absence in Italy, the Professor entrusted the keys of his rooms and of all his artistic treasures to one of the Fellows ; with full permission to pry into and rummage all his cabinets, bookcases, and drawers. These privileges were shared largely by the favoured one with his colleagues, and not a few distinguished persons who made pilgrimage to Ruskin’s rooms as to an artistic Mecca. There were some dozens of Turner’s most celebrated drawings, kept carefully in cabinets from the light which might injure them. There were also drawings by other English masters, a few fine oil paintings, precious missals, rare old Florentine and German drawings and engravings, and, perhaps most interesting of all, many manuscript note-books, the sources of Ruskin’s own great works. Among these his Venetian note-books were of special interest ; the writing, as in all, exquisitely neat and clear ; the drawings more beautiful and vigorous than any of the engraved copies can indicate—many of them, too, never reproduced in the published books.” It was in these rooms that Ruskin gave breakfast parties to the diggers, presently to be mentioned. Ruskin gave up his rooms in Corpus upon resigning the Professorship in 1878. In 1882 he was re-elected to it, and he was often in Oxford during that year and the two next following. On these occasions he sometimes stayed with Sir Henry Acland, and sometimes with Mr. Jowett in Balliol, but more often with Mr.

<sup>1</sup> *Oxford and its Colleges*, by J. Wells, p. 200.

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Macdonald, the master of his Drawing School, at 84 Woodstock Road.

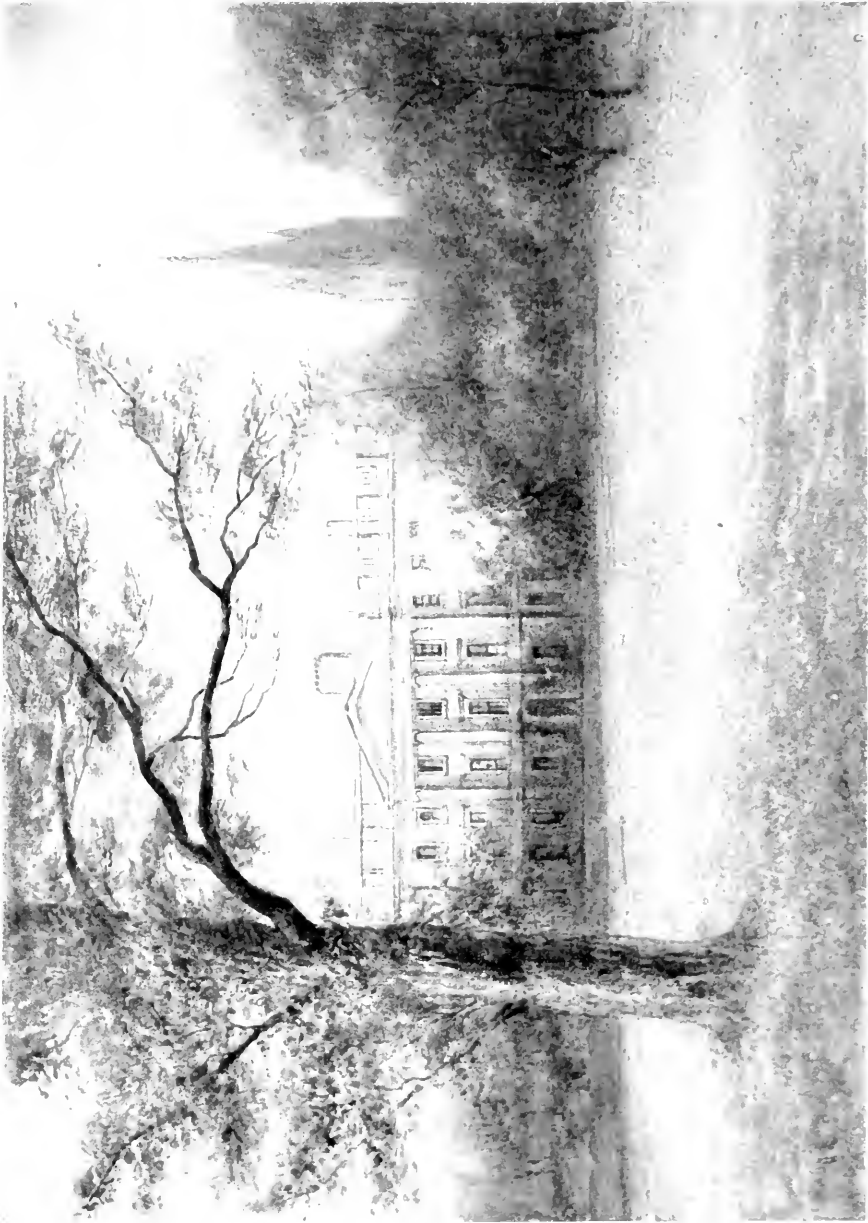
Of Ruskin's favourite haunts during residence at Oxford, something may be gleaned from stray references in his books. He was fond of reading in the Bodleian, where his friend Dr. Coxe, the Librarian, would bring out favourite manuscripts for him to study or to paint from ; some of the studies may be seen in the Ruskin Drawing School. Ruskin applied an apologue from the Bodleian to the proposal to open up Ambleside and Rydal by a railway. He knew not, he wrote, what to say : " Suppose I were sitting, where still, in much-changed Oxford, I am happy to find myself, in one of the little latticed cells of the Bodleian Librarian, and my kind and much-loved friend, Mr. Coxe, were to come to me with news that it was proposed to send nine hundred excursionists through the library every day, in three parties of three hundred each ; that it was intended they should elevate their minds by reading all the books they could lay hold of, while they stayed ;—and that practically scientific persons accompanying them were to look out for and burn all the manuscripts that had any gold in their illuminations, that the said gold might be made of practical service ; but that he, Mr. Coxe, could not, for his part, sympathise with the movement, and hoped I would write something in deprecation of it ! As I should then feel, I feel now, at Mr. Somervell's request that I would write him a preface in defence of Helvellyn." Of Oxford gardens, he was fond of the Fellows' Garden in his own Corpus, " walled by the walls of old Oxford." <sup>1</sup> The terrace walk on the top of the mound, looking over the walls, is a delightful spot ; charming too is the herbaceous border against the college buildings with the doorway over which the clematis climbs ; while the stretch of green sward looks like

<sup>1</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 25, where early morning in the garden is described.





OXFORD: CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE





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one of those pieces of turf of which an Oxford college gardener, being requested by an American tourist to explain the secret, is reported to have said, "We mow and roll it for four hundred years." But Ruskin seems most to have loved St. John's. "I walked yesterday afternoon," he said in one of his latest lectures, "round St. John's gardens, and found them, as they always are in spring-time, almost an ideal of the earthly Paradise."<sup>1</sup> Of more distant walks, he had been fond in earlier years of Iffley and Cowley; it was in lodgings at the latter place that in 1857 he had written *The Political Economy of Art*. But twenty years had brought great changes, and "what was once the most beautiful approach to an academical city of any in Europe" had become, he said in an Oxford lecture, "a wilderness of obscure and base buildings." Those who heard the lectures will recall many such a passage upon the vulgarisation of the suburbs of Oxford; but there was one walk which in some parts at least of the traverse remained unspoilt in Ruskin's time, and in a measure remains so still. This is the road from Oxford to Abingdon. He stayed much, as I have already said, at the latter town, and often walked into and out of Oxford—resting to see "the wild hyacinths open in flakes of blue fire in the glades of Bagley Wood"<sup>2</sup>; or finding, it may be, a grassy spot on Boar's Hill, "a hanging wood partly revealed below, and lying face downwards on the turf to gaze on Oxford far below—the Oxford Turner saw."<sup>3</sup> He was certainly fond, as may be gathered from passing references in his books,<sup>4</sup> of the walk in the "Happy Valley," as it is called, near South Hinksey; one of the little valleys, as Dr. Arnold describes in recounting his own favourite walks, that debouch on the valley of the Thames behind the Hinkseys.

<sup>1</sup> *The Art of England*, § 123.

<sup>2</sup> *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 6.

<sup>3</sup> F. D. How's *Oxford*.

<sup>4</sup> See Library Edition, vol. xxviii, pp. 127, 527.

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It is, however, to the other Hinksey—North, or Ferry Hinksey—that the pilgrim will go for the closest association with Ruskin. This village, with its old church, pretty cottages, and wide green charmed him greatly. Mr. Albert Goodwin made a drawing of the church for him: “a lovely record of the sweetest of all our old village churches,” he called it, when placing it among the examples in his Drawing School. The cottages, of stone, with picturesque windows and thatched roofs, are very charming; and the green was the scene of Ruskin’s famous diggings. To reach North Hinksey from Oxford, the pedestrian goes past the Great Western Station, under the railway bridge, and follows the Seven Bridges Road till he comes on the left to the “Ferry Hinksey Road.” The road presently becomes a path, with bridges over several streams, the last of which is crossed by a ferry just below the village. If you are driving, you continue further along the Seven Bridges Road, and then turn off through Botley by a pretty road which takes you past the church to the path from the Ferry. The carriage-road then goes uphill; the village lane continues in a straight course. You pass through an open gate, and the village green with its fine trees opens before you. Mr. Taunt, who has illustrated the scene with some capital photographs,<sup>1</sup> calls attention justly to the deserted quiet of the place “when its few inhabitants are away labouring in the fields, with scarce a sound except the song of the birds in the old pollard elms or hedges, or the gabble of the geese and ducks which roam about the Green, as if everything belonged to them and no outsider had any right to cross their domain.” The children are in school, and no one is in sight except some oldest inhabitant leaning in the sunshine over a cottage gate. Ruskin’s connexion with the place is not forgotten, but local tradition is hazy. When I was

<sup>1</sup> In his *Arnold's Poems and Country Illustrated*.

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last there, I was told that "Mr. Ruskin's road" was a disused causeway beside the Ferry path which was in fact constructed by the late Mr. E. W. Harcourt of Nuneham when he had some idea of laying out his property at Hinksey as a building estate. The real Ruskin road is the village lane which I have already mentioned. "I don't know in all England," he had written to Acland in 1873, "a lovelier site of road than the lane along the foot of the hills past Ferry Hinksey, and I want Mr. Harcourt's leave to take up the bit of it immediately to the south of the village and bring it into the prettiest shape I can. . . . That country road under the slope of the hill, with its irregular line of trees sheltering yet not darkening it, is capable of being made one of the loveliest things in this English world by only a little tenderness and patience, in easy labour. We can get all stagnant water carried away of course, and we can make the cottages more healthy; and the walk, within little time and slight strength from Oxford, far more beautiful than any college gardens can be. So I have got one or two of my men to promise me they will do what work is necessary with their own shoulders." Mr. Harcourt gave the required permission, and the Ruskin diggings began. I have told the story of them, and the objects of them, and have discussed their significance, fully elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The scene of this experiment in Ruskin's gospel of healthy and useful manual labour must always be of some interest to students of his life and work; but, alas! the present state of the ground accords precisely with his descriptions of the evils which he wanted to remedy, and not with the ideal which his diggings were intended to realise. The high bank, along which the path runs, shows by the lower level of the road, the depth of the diggings and the hard work which the undergraduates enlisted by the Professor of Fine Art

<sup>1</sup> See Library Edition, introduction to vol. xx.; and *Life of Ruskin*, vol. ii. ch. x.

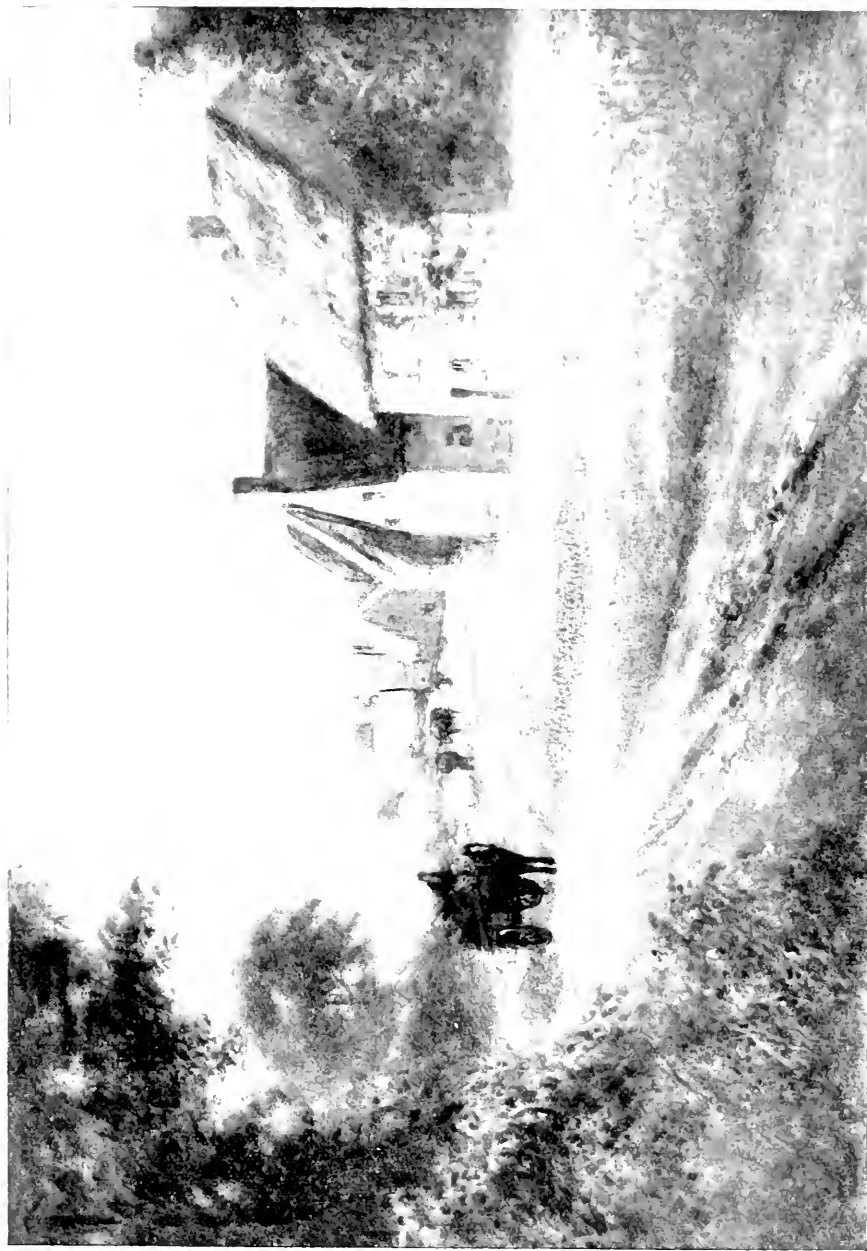
## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

must have put into their job as amateur navvies. There was a picture in the *Graphic* at the time which showed the young men thus at work. But for the rest the former state of the road can hardly have been very much worse than the present. Whether it be that the work was not kept in subsequent repair, or that the engineering of the scheme was originally faulty, I do not know. Probably there is something in both explanations. The surveyor sent by the owner to inspect the work, when the Professor had discharged his disciples, is said to have reported that "the young gentlemen have done no mischief to speak of;" and Ruskin himself was once heard to say that the road made by his pupils was still about the worst in the three kingdoms. When after crossing the Ferry, you turn to the left in the lane under the hills, you come to a depression in front of a cottage with beautiful old steps going up to its door. This depression in the road was usually full of stagnant water before Ruskin took the place in hand. It was full of stagnant water still, when I last visited the village (July 1912). As you proceed, you come to a much larger depression. Ruskin wanted to fill it up, and turf it over. The turf remains in place, but so does stagnant water. Ruskin's description of the spot as it might be made is very charming;<sup>1</sup> and, but for the stagnant pools, the place is a beautiful piece of English village scenery. Why should not the new Oxford School of Agriculture and Forestry resume Ruskin's work and take the place in hand as an object-lesson?

The other place in Oxford most closely associated with Ruskin is his own Drawing School, which occupies the ground floor of a wing of the University Galleries. The visitor who is making a Ruskin pilgrimage should first look in the Galleries themselves at the collection of drawings by Turner. They include several

<sup>1</sup> See Library Edition, as cited above.





THE "RUSKIN ROAD" AT HINKSEY



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of the original drawings made for the *Rivers of France* ; Ruskin was fortunate enough to secure seventeen of these for £1000 ; what, I wonder, would they fetch at auction to-day ? He presented them, with many other drawings by Turner, to the University in 1861. The “ Ruskin Art Collection ” in the Drawing School, which he founded and endowed during his Professorship, contains other drawings by Turner, and some of these are of great value also ; but it is only of the collection as illustrating Ruskin’s haunts that anything need here be said.<sup>1</sup> Of the nine hundred pieces presented by Ruskin, one hundred and seventy are by his own hand, and of these a very large number were made expressly for his Oxford work. Other examples are the original drawings for many of the plates in his published books. Then again a diligent Ruskinian might almost compile an autobiography of the master’s wanderings from these drawings at Oxford. Sometimes indeed he framed actual leaves of his travelling diaries—diaries composed partly of written notes, partly of rough sketches. Thus the frame No. 172 in the Reference Series contains some leaves from the diary of his Italian tour of 1871. The leaves are inserted for the sake of their architectural studies from the tombs of Roger the First, and Frederick the Second, at Palermo ; but they are interspersed with travel notes such as this :—“ Segni, west of line, quarter-hour past Velletri, worth stopping. Just past Segni station, west portico of temple on hill, very important. Sparagla, magnificent hill town.” Of his Venetian visits, and of the amount of work he did in careful architectural study, there is abundant evidence in many of the cabinets. Elsewhere in the collection we find him at Lucca. A drawing of San Michele, containing much exquisite detail, is dated 1845—the year of the tour which, as explained below (p. 186),

<sup>1</sup> For a full account and catalogue of the collection, see vol. xxi. of the Library Edition.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

was decisive in his Italian studies. There are sketches, too, of Assisi, another of the towns connected with his mental history (p. 195). There are drawings, indeed, either by himself or by his assistants, of nearly every place about which he wrote. Abbeville, Amiens, Avallon, Bâle, Bologna, Bourges, the Brezon, Brieg, Chamouni, Chartres, Como, Fiesole, Florence, Fribourg, Glenfinlas, Laon, Le Puy, Lucerne, Neuchâtel, Orvieto, Padua, Palermo, Pisa, Rheinfelden, Rheims, Rome, Rouen, Siena, Strasburg, Thun, Venice, Verona, Vevey: these are some of them, and a Ruskinian pilgrim will find a rich treat in examining the cabinets in the Ruskin Drawing School.

Something of the same interest attaches to the collection of drawings in the Ruskin Museum at Sheffield,<sup>1</sup> though here few of the pieces are by Ruskin's hand. One of the objects he set before himself in forming this collection was to obtain, while yet there was time, painted records of continental architecture and scenery, and for this purpose he employed several young artists, English and foreign. Here, then, again we find many sketches—by Mr. Randal, Mr. Rooke, Mr. Newman, Mr. Bunney, Signor Alessandri, and others—illustrating Ruskin's favourite haunts and studies.

Ruskin's affection for Oxford, and his zeal in promoting the study of art there, find permanent memorial in his existing benefactions—his gift of Turner drawings to the University Galleries, the endowment of a Drawing Master, the gift of the Ruskin Art Collection. It was at one time his intention to leave other treasures to the University, and to place them in one of his

<sup>1</sup> The limits of this book forbid any more detailed account of Ruskin's connexion, through his Guild of St. George, with Sheffield. The story of the Guild, and a catalogue of the Museum, are given in vol. xxx. of the Library Edition.

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favourite haunts. In a will dated October 23, 1883, these words may be read :—

“I leave to the trustees from time to time of the Bodleian Library at Oxford the following things (excepting any they see fit to reject) upon trust to place and ever keep the same in the said Library by themselves together and apart from the other collections therein marked calling and showing the same as the ‘*Ruskin Gift*’:— (a) the contents of the bookcase and three mineralogical cabinets at the end opposite the fireplace of my study at Brantwood and the cases themselves; (b) the portrait of the Doge Andrea Gritti by Titian; (c) the portrait of my father as a young man [by Raeburn] which hangs over the mantelpiece in the dining-room at Brantwood; (d) the drawings by Turner and myself named in a list which I intend to make hereafter and place in the above-named bookcase marked as the ‘*Drawings for the Bodleian bequest*.’”

Presently, however, Ruskin fell out of sympathy with the University and this bequest was revoked by a Codicil of June 4, 1884. Soon afterwards he resigned his Professorship, and left Oxford. “I have never seen Oxford since,” wrote Newman, telling the story of his own rupture with the University, “excepting its spires as they are seen from the railway.” In his old age Newman, however, revisited the University; but Ruskin’s old age was clouded, and after 1884 he never again saw the home and haunts of his undergraduate and professorial days.

## CHAPTER XII

### ITALY

"Very nearly did the University have to mourn not long ago the loss through mortal sickness of one of her professors—one who in his own subject stands alone—John Ruskin. 'But the public prayers of many cities prevailed.' And this, I think, is not undeserving of mention that quite lately when I was staying in Italy I had the fortune to see how great was the anxiety, how many the supplications called forth on his behalf in that land whose arts and public buildings his learning and eloquence have done so much to adorn."

SUCH were the words in which, on Ruskin's recovery from nearly mortal illness in 1878, the Senior Proctor, in his review of the year at Oxford, referred to the anxiety which had been felt in Italy. It was a true saying. Ruskin did more than any other man of his time to familiarise his countrymen with the early art and architecture of Italy. We may apply to his writings about Italy what Tennyson wrote of Edward Lear's illustrated travels in Greek lands :—

"All things fair  
With such a pencil, such a pen,  
You shadow forth to distant men,  
I read and felt that I was there."

But there was one exception, and let us have done with it at once in order that we may be free to follow Ruskin to some of his favourite haunts. He liked Sicily, where however he spent only a few days, but he did not love Southern Italy. He was in a morbid state alike of body and of mind when he first saw it (on his tour in search of health in 1840-41), and the early impression never left him. The volcanic country, for all its occasional beauty, oppressed him with a sense of desolation ; the blue sea lost its brightness in his eyes, because it broke on black sand.

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That is the impression which is recorded with much detail in the chapter of *Præterita* entitled "Cumæ"; and in the last volume of *Modern Painters*, written nearly twenty years later than the visit recorded in *Præterita*, the same aspect is presented to us. "We are accustomed," he says, "to hear the south of Italy spoken of as a beautiful country. Its mountain forms are graceful above others, its sea bays exquisite in outline and hue; but it is only beautiful in superficial aspect. In closer detail it is wild and melancholy. Its forests are sombre-leaved, labyrinth-stemmed; the carubbe, the olive, laurel, and ilex are alike in that strange feverish twisting of their branches, as if in spasms of half human pain:—Avernus forests; one fears to break their boughs, lest they should cry to us from their rents; the rocks they shade are of ashes, or thrice-molten lava; iron sponge whose every pore has been filled with fire. Silent villages, earthquake shaken, without commerce, without industry, without knowledge, without hope, gleam in white ruin from hillside to hillside; far-winding wrecks of immemorial walls surround the dust of cities long forsaken; the mountain streams moan through the cold arches of their foundations, green with weed, and rage over the heaps of their fallen towers. Far above, in thunder-blue serration, stand the eternal edges of the angry Apennine, dark with rolling impendence of volcanic cloud."

Very different was Ruskin's feeling for the north of Italy. The Lakes were favourite haunts of his, and he had a decided opinion on the vexed question of the relative claims of Como and Maggiore to the first place. Wordsworth, it may be remembered, pronounced Como "the King of the Italian lakes." Ruskin did not agree. His fondest memories perhaps were of Como, which he had seen on his first visit as a child to Italy, and which had some associative charm for him through Turner's vignettes in

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Rogers's *Italy*. But reflection made him give the palm to Maggiore. "The Eden of Italy," he calls it in *Præterita*, and already in his *Poetry of Architecture* (1838) he had criticised the common preference for Como. "The Lake of Como is the resort of half Italy, while the Lago Maggiore possesses scarcely one villa of importance, besides those on the Borromean Islands. Yet the Lago Maggiore is far better adapted for producing and sustaining a pleasurable impression, than that of Como." Those who remember Ruskin's analysis of the beautiful, and the importance which he gives therein to the idea of infinity, will have no difficulty in understanding his preference for the wide spaces and broad horizons of Maggiore, where, as he somewhere says, "soft golden sky is seen over far-away hills," and from shores dark with ilex and soft with olive you may look up at the Alps of the Simplon "soaring through their twelve thousand feet of air, purple with everlasting pines." In Ruskin's preferences something should too perhaps be allowed to the association with the Lago Maggiore of his favourite Luini—"born in the loveliest district of North Italy, where hills, and streams, and air, meet in softest harmonies—child of the Alps and of their divinest lake." Ruskin's favourite haunts in Italian lakeland were then on the Lago Maggiore. Como, too, he loved, as I have said, and its beauties he depicted: witness the plate of "Lake, Land, and Cloud" in *Modern Painters*. He knew the Lake of Garda and refers to the beauty of the distant views of it and to its fretful shore. He was often at Lugano, and once at least at Orta where he noted the pathetic beauty of the chapels among the mountain cedars; the lovely journey across the lake and the walk across the Colma to Varallo, celebrated in Browning's "By the Fireside," he does not seem to have made. At Varese he sometimes stopped, and he praises the beauty of the drives in its neighbourhood. But it was at Baveno on his divinest lake:



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that he stayed most often, finding there the deepest enjoyment. And indeed is there any spot where there are softer reflections in quiet water, of shining village in lovely lake? And then too, as he somewhere says, "there are the heavenly richness and majesty of the landscape above Baveno," and "the grand chestnut woods." But when the woods are passed and the grassy plateau is reached, he became a heretic. The Monte Motterone, described so gloriously by George Meredith in *Vittoria*, was to Ruskin "a stupid mountain" with the "dullest view of the Alps."

What is the best view in Italy? The opinion of Ruskin who knew the country so well may be interesting, though indeed the question admits of no precise debate, unless the term "best" be closely defined. Ruskin, however, pronounced the view of Florence from Fiesole to be "certainly the view of all the world." Mrs. Browning, one may surmise from her poems, preferred the view from the opposite Bellosguardo; but Ruskin might cite Lorenzo the Magnificent in favour of his side. Something of the preference was due, no doubt, to association with Milton, whose line about Galileo "at evening from the top of Fesolè," is often quoted in Ruskin's books; and something, too, perhaps to his own association of the young Giotto with the spot:—"As travellers ascend the hill which rises from Florence to the lowest break in the ridge at Fiesole, they pass continually beneath the walls of villas bright in perfect luxury, and beside cypress hedges, enclosing fair terraced gardens, where the masses of oleander and magnolia, motionless as leaves in a picture, inlay alternately upon the blue sky their branching lightness of pale rose colour, and deep green breadth of shade, studded with balls of budding silver, and showing at intervals through their framework of rich leaf and rubied flower, the far-away bends of the Arno beneath its slopes of olive, and the purple peaks of the Carrara mountains, tossing themselves

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against the western distance, where the streaks of motionless clouds burn above the Pisan Sea. . . . We may fancy the glance of the boy, when he and Cimabue stood side by side on the ridge of Fiesole, and for the first time he saw the flowering thickets of the Val d'Arno ; and deep beneath, the innumerable towers of the city of the Lily, the depths of his own heart yet hiding the fairest of them all."

The best view of Italy, in another sense, is to be obtained, according to Ruskin, at Turin, on the hill above the city to the east ; " commanding, therefore, the view over it and beyond it, westward—a view which, perhaps, of all those that can be obtained north of the Apennines, gives the most comprehensive idea of the nature of Italy, considered as one great country. If you glance at the map, you will observe that Turin is placed in the centre of the crescent which the Alps form round the basin of Piedmont ; it is within ten miles of the foot of the mountains at the nearest point ; and from that point the chain extends half round the city in one unbroken moorish crescent, forming three-fourths of a circle from the Col di Tenda to the St. Gothard ; that is to say, just two hundred miles of Alps, as the bird flies. I don't speak rhetorically or carelessly ; I speak as I ought to speak here "—he was lecturing at Cambridge—" with mathematical precision. Take the scale on your map ; measure fifty miles of it accurately ; try that measure from the Col di Tenda to the St. Gothard, and you will find that four cords of fifty miles will not quite reach the two extremities of the curve. You see, then, from this spot, the plain of Piedmont, on the north and south, literally as far as the eye can reach ; so that the plain terminates as the sea does, with a level blue line, only tufted with woods instead of waves, and crowded with towers of cities instead of ships. Then in the luminous air beyond and behind this blue

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horizon line, stand, as it were, the shadows of mountains, they themselves dark, for the southern slopes of the Alps of the Lago Maggiore and Bellinzona are all without snow ; but the light of the unseen snowfields, lying level behind the visible peaks, is sent up with strange reflection upon the clouds ; an everlasting light of calm Aurora in the north. Then, higher and higher around the approaching darkness of the plain, rise the central chains, not as on the Switzer's side a recognisable group and following of successive and separate hills, but a wilderness of jagged peaks, cast in passionate and fierce profusion along the circumference of heaven ; precipice behind precipice, and gulf beyond gulf, filled with the flaming of the sunset, and forming mighty channels for the flowings of the clouds, which roll up against them out of the vast Italian plain, forced together by the narrowing crescent, and breaking up at last against the Alpine walls in towers of spectral spray ; or sweeping up its ravines with long moans of complaining thunder. Out from beneath the cloudy pillars, as they pass, emerge for ever the great battlements of the memorable and perpetual hills : Viso, with her shepherd witnesses to ancient faith ; Rocca-Melone, the highest place of Alpine pilgrimage ; Iseran, who shed her burial sheets of snow about the march of Hannibal ; Cenis, who shone with her glacier light on the descent of Charlemagne ; Paradiso, who watched with her opposite crest the stoop of the French eagle to Marengo ; and underneath all these, lying in her soft languor, this tender Italy, lapped in dews of sleep, or more than sleep—one knows not if it be trance, from which morning shall yet roll the blinding mists away, or if the fair shadows of her quietude are indeed the shades of purple death. And, lifted a little above this solemn plain, and looking beyond it to its snowy ramparts, vainly guardian, stands this palace dedicate to pleasure, the whole legend of Italy's past history written before

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it by the finger of God, written as with an iron pen upon the rock for ever, on all those fronting walls of reproachful Alp ; blazoned in gold of lightning upon the clouds that still open and close their unsealed scrolls in heaven ; painted in purple and scarlet upon the mighty missal pages of sunset after sunset, spread vainly before a nation's eyes for a nation's prayer."

There are few spots in Italy which will have greater interest to a good Ruskinian than this hill above the Po, opposite to Turin. The Villa della Regina, the palace built in 1650 for the pleasure-loving Cardinal Meurice, in whose deserted gardens Ruskin walked day by day during a long sojourn at Turin in 1858, is now used as a school for the daughters of military officers who have fallen in battle. But a little below it, on the Monte dei Cappuccini, the Italian Alpine Club has a museum with a belvedere ; and from it, or equally well from the terrace in front of the adjoining church, the view described by Ruskin may in favourable weather be enjoyed. There is always a pious interest in standing upon the spot where some famous man has been inspired—as at Rome with Gibbon on the Capitol, or with Shelley on the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. It was at Turin in 1858 that Ruskin found, or thought he found, a reconciliation of many conflicting problems in the theory and history of art—the relation, for instance, of art and pleasure, and the relation of the "purist" to the "naturalist" ideal ; it was then, too, that he was decisively "unconverted," from the narrow Protestantism of his earlier years ; and it was on this hillside above Turin that in 1858 he thought out the questions, such as these, which had long perplexed him.<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin stayed at Turin in some other years ; and indeed the town has much of interest in itself and in its immediate surround-

<sup>1</sup> For an account of these matters, see my *Life of Ruskin*, vol. i. chap. xxv.

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ings ; while to some of us it has an added charm as the starting point for excursions among the Italian valleys of Monte Rosa, or as the place to which one returns in order to rest after a period in rough quarters, or it may be to enjoy for a while the flesh pots of its hotels (Ruskin's was the " Europa "). He made at one time or another many of the nearer excursions. He went often to the Superga ; less for the sake of the tombs of the princes of the royal house, than for that of the view : Turner's drawing of Turin made from the spot was in his collection. Ruskin went also to the Sagra di San Michele—the wonderfully picturesque church perched on the summit of the Pirchiriano, of which there is a charming account in Mr. Samuel Butler's *Alps and Sanctuaries*. Ruskin's description may be read in the Library Edition of his Works.<sup>1</sup> He was fond too of Susa, where (as he wrote to Rossetti's Miss Siddal in recommending the place) " if with red campaniles, green and white torrents, purple-grey and russet rocks, deep green pines, white snows, and blue valley distance, you can't make up a scene to your satisfaction, I shan't pity you." Susa, as every traveller used to know, lies at the foot of the old pass of Mont Cenis. The pass, once a favourite road into Italy, is now almost deserted, for the railway line diverges widely from the Mont Cenis, whose name it has usurped.<sup>2</sup> Ruskin was familiar with every inch and turn of the road. Many of the effects of cloud engraved in the last volume of *Modern Painters* were caught among the mountains on the Italian side of the pass ; and many pictures of places on the French side occur among his drawings and in his books.

It was at a date thirteen years earlier than his principal visit to Turin that Ruskin's serious initiation into the appreciation

<sup>1</sup> Vol. vii. pp. xlv.-xlvi.

<sup>2</sup> There is a pleasant chapter on the old pass in Mr. Sully's *Italian Travel Sketches*.

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and the problems of Italian art had taken place. The obsession of Italy began with him in 1845. He had been in Italy several times before, but it was only then, he tells us, that his eyes and heart were truly open. The city of his initiation was Lucca. The inlaid architecture of the churches, the paintings of Fra Bartolommeo and the tomb of Ilaria di Caretto by Quercia were each in turn a revelation to Ruskin. He has described his impressions fully in two places—in the epilogue to the separate edition of *Modern Painters* (volume ii.), and in *Præterita*; and the influence of those works upon him might already have been detected in passages written at the time. The Lombard architecture forms the theme of some pages in *The Seven Lamps* and *The Stones of Venice*. The canticle in praise of early Italian painting with which the second volume of *Modern Painters* was brought to a close links the St. Stephen of Fra Bartolommeo with the St. Catherine of Raphael; and in the same book the tomb of Ilaria was given as “an instance of the exact and right mean between the rigidity and rudeness of the earlier monumental effigies, and the morbid imitation of life, sleep, or death, of which the fashion has taken place in modern times. She is lying on a simple couch with a hound at her feet; not on the side, but with the head laid straight and simply on the hard pillow, in which, let it be observed, there is no effort at deceptive imitation of pressure. It is understood as a pillow, but not mistaken for one. The hair is bound in a braid over the fair brow, the sweet and arched lips are closed, the tenderness of the loving lips is set and quiet; there is that about them which forbids breath; something which is not death nor sleep, but the pure image of both. The hands are not lifted in prayer, neither folded, but the arms are laid at length upon the body, and the hands cross as they fall. The feet are hidden by the drapery, and the forms of the limbs concealed, but



LUCCA, FROM THE HILLS ABOVE MORIANO





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not their tenderness. If any of us, after staying for a time beside this tomb, could see, through his tears, one of the vain and unkind encumbrances of the grave, which, in these hollow and heartless days, feigned sorrow builds to foolish pride, he would, I believe, receive such a lesson of love as no coldness could refuse, no fatuity forget, and no insolence disobey." Ruskin often revisited Lucca in later years, enlarging and in some ways modifying his first impressions, but Quercia's Ilaria remained his ideal of Christian sculpture. Any disciple of Ruskin may be accounted fortunate who enters upon the study of Italian art by the same gate. I know of no Italian city which preserves intact so much of the mediæval aspect. Ruskin stayed in the Albergo dell' Universo, which occupies the first floor of the old Palazzo Arnolfini. As Mr. Hare truly remarks of this inn, "without losing its character as an Italian *albergo* it has all the comfort and cleanliness which English travellers require." Mr. Montgomery Carmichael, who has a pleasant chapter on Lucca in his volume entitled *In Tuscany*, copied the following entry from the inn album :—

"Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Collingwood stayed here three weeks in the October of 1882; and have been entirely comfortable in the care of M. Nieri and his servants."

I hope that the entry survives intact, but the autograph-hunter has few scruples, and at Assisi, in the "Leone," Ruskin's name has been cut out. "The Lucchesi," says Mr. Carmichael, "remember Mr. Ruskin's several visits very well, and with much pride and pleasure. They tell many an anecdote about the *gran scrittore inglese* who used to go about with a man bearing a ladder, and scale the façades and interiors of their churches, peering into all manner of nooks and crannies with strange persistency and devotion."

The second stage in Ruskin's Italian pilgrimage of 1845 was

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Pisa, where the frescoes of the Campo Santo became to him a veritable Paradise, and opened his eyes, as those of the Pre-Raphaelites, to the appreciation of the early Italian painters. The rapture of his days at Pisa is told in the chapter of *Præterita* entitled "The Campo Santo" and in many of his letters. The city was, he says, one of the three centres of his life's thought, and the description of it in the days of its early splendour is the subject of one of his most elaborate passages :—"On each side of a bright river he saw rise a line of brighter palaces, arched and pillared, and inlaid with deep red porphyry and with serpentine ; along the quays before their gates were riding troops of knights, noble in face and form, dazzling in crest and shield ; horse and man one labyrinth of quaint colour and gleaming light—the purple, the silver, and scarlet fringes flowing over the strong limbs and clashing mail, like sea-waves over rocks at sunset. Opening on each side from the river were gardens, courts, and cloisters ; long successions of white pillars among wreaths of vine ; leaping of fountains through buds of pomegranate and orange ; and still along the garden paths, and under and through the crimson of the pomegranate shadows, moving slowly, groups of the fairest women that Italy ever saw—fairest, because purest and thoughtfulest ; trained in all high knowledge, as in all courteous art—in dance, in song, in sweet wit, in lofty learning, in loftier courage, in loftiest love—able alike to cheer, to enchant, or save, the souls of men. Above all this scenery of perfect human life, rose dome and bell-tower, burning with white alabaster and gold : beyond dome and bell-tower, the slopes of mighty hills, hoary with olive ; far in the north, above a purple sea of peaks of solemn Apennine, the clear, sharp-cloven Carrara mountains sent up their steadfast flames of marble summit into amber sky ; the great sea itself, scorching with expanse of light, stretching from their feet to the

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Gorgonian isles ; and over all these, ever present, near or far—seen through the leaves of vine, or imaged with all its march of clouds in the Arno's stream, or set with its depths of blue close against the golden hair or burning cheek of lady and knight,—that untroubled and sacred sky, which was to all men, in those days of innocent faith, indeed the unquestioned abode of spirits, as the earth was of men ; and which opened straight through its gates of cloud and veils of dew into the awfulness of the eternal world ;—a heaven in which every cloud that passed was literally the chariot of an angel, and every ray of its evening and morning streamed from the throne of God." Such was Ruskin's vision of Pisa in the days of Pisano and Dante, in the times when its Campo Santo was painted with the burning messages of prophecy. Over rich, some critics have thought his description ; but even as late as the year of Evelyn's Diary there was " hardly any city in Italy which exceeded Pisa for stately edifices " and " spacious gardens." Evelyn, it is interesting to note, had an admiring eye for the Cathedral and the Baptistery and the pulpit of Niccolo Pisano ; therein differing from Shelley, who spent many months in Pisa, enjoying its quietude and beauty, but without any perception, says his biographer, of the city's worth as a treasury of Italian art. But at one point Shelley and Ruskin were agreed. Readers of *Præterita* and the Letters will know how often Ruskin stood at evening on the chapel of the Thorn to watch the sunset on the Arno. And " stand on the marble arch," said Shelley, " cast your eye, if you are not dazzled, on its river glowing as with fire, then follow the graceful curve of the palaces on the Lung' Arno till the arch is naved by the massy dungeon tower frowning in dark relief, and tell me if anything can surpass a sunset at Pisa." Ruskin revisited Pisa two or three times during his Oxford professorship. It is the place in which to read his lectures

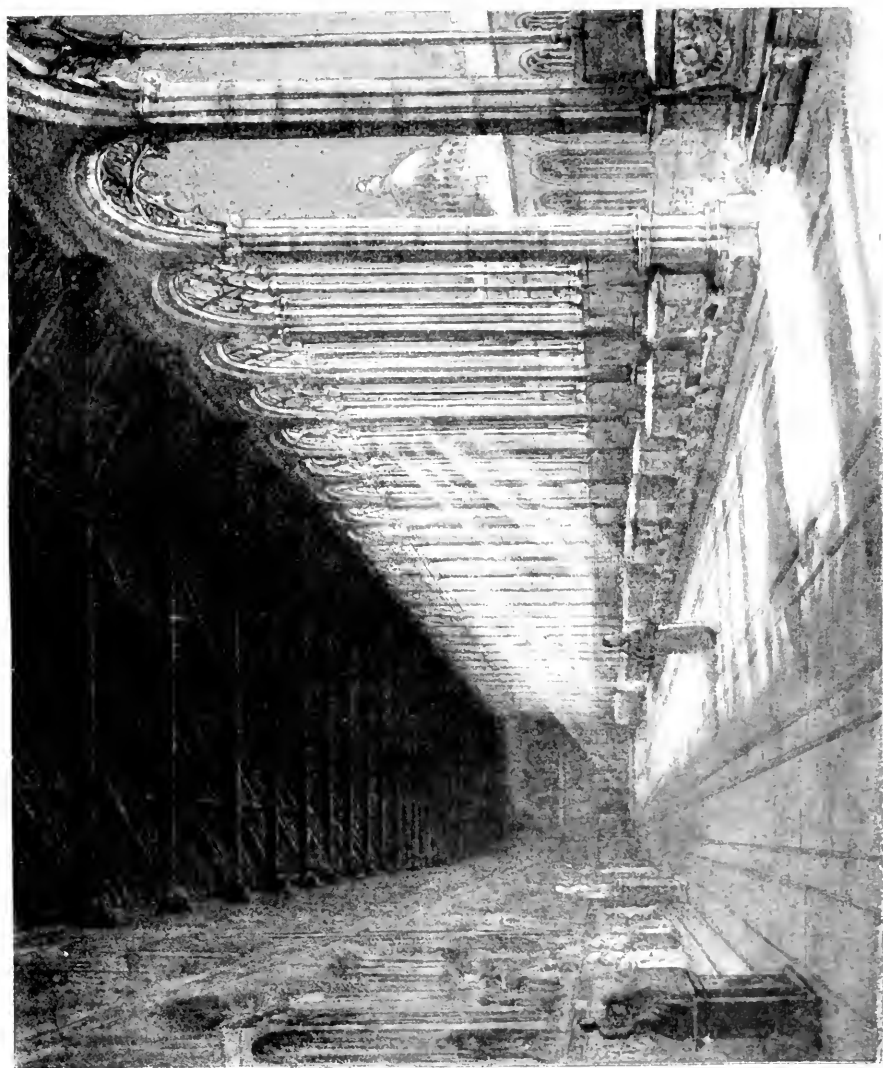
## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

called *Val d'Arno*—a book which Carlyle found “so full of beautiful and delicate perceptions and ideas both new and true which throw a bright illumination over that important piece of history.” It is of the Campo Santo, described in that book and in *Præterita*, that our artist gives a view (Plate XXXIX). The Campo Santo is, said Ruskin, “one of the three most precious buildings in Italy ; buildings, I mean, consistently decorated with a series of paintings at the time of their erection, and still exhibiting that series in its original order.” The other two buildings in his list are the Sistine Chapel at Rome, and the Scuola di San Rocco at Venice.

From Pisa Ruskin went on, in 1845, to Florence. He had been there before, but this was the first visit on which his eyes were fully opened to its treasures of art. With Florence, next only to Venice, among Italian cities, Ruskin's name and fame are most closely linked ; and though many of his Florentine studies belong to a later time, it was during his long sojourn there in 1845 that he formed his earlier and as most people will think his better estimate of Michael Angelo, and that he learnt to love the Campanile of Giotto. He was fortunate in his lodgings which he describes as being “in the Cathedral square, looking bolt on Giotto's Campanile, facing east.” I wish that it were possible to identify the rooms ; for if the house still stands, it might well be marked with a tablet. The spot is worthy of memorial, in which Ruskin sat down to pen his famous piece in praise of Giotto's Tower. He enumerates the conditions of power and beauty which are the grounds of the deepest impressions with which architecture can affect the human mind, and then he goes on :—“These characteristics occur more or less in different buildings, some in one and some in another. But all together, and all in their highest possible relative degrees, they exist, as far as I know,



PISA: THE CAMPO SANTO







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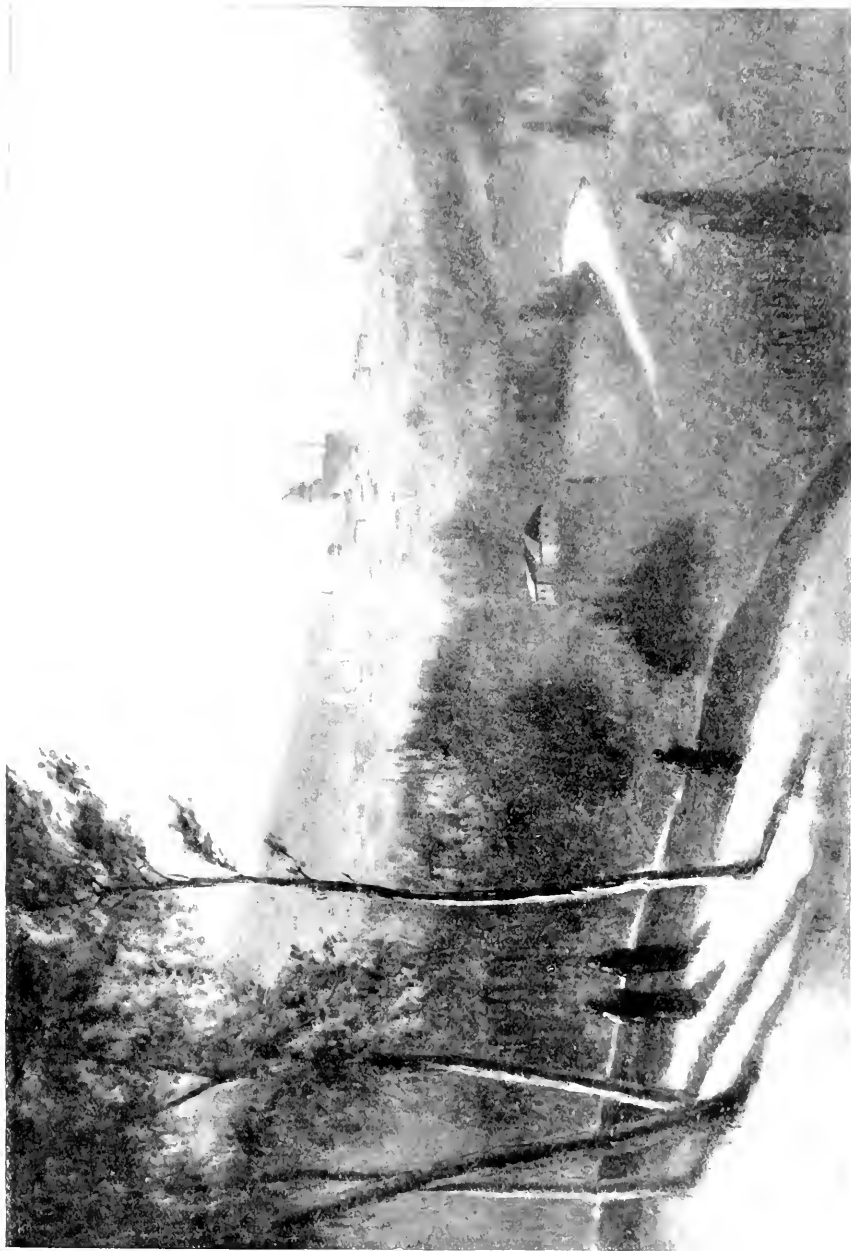
only in one building in the world, the Campanile of Giotto at Florence. In its first appeal to the stranger's eye there is something unpleasing ; a mingling, as it seems to him, of over-severity with over-minuteness. But let him give it time, as he should to all other consummate art. I remember well how, when a boy, I used to despise that Campanile, and think it meanly smoothed and finished. But I have since lived beside it many a day, and looked out upon it from my windows by sunlight and moonlight, and I shall not soon forget how profound and gloomy appeared to me the savageness of the Northern Gothic, when I afterwards stood, for the first time, beneath the front of Salisbury. The contrast is indeed strange, if it could be quickly felt, between the rising of those grey walls out of their quiet swarded space, like dark and barren rocks out of a green lake, with their rude, mouldering, rough-grained shafts, and triple lights, without tracery or other ornament than the martins' nests in the height of them, and that bright, smooth, sunny surface of glowing jasper, those spiral shafts and fairy traceries, so white, so faint, so crystalline, that their slight shapes are hardly traced in darkness on the pallor of the eastern sky, that serene height of mountain alabaster, coloured like a morning cloud, and chased like a sea shell. And if this be, as I believe it, the model and mirror of perfect architecture, is there not something to be learned by looking back to the early life of him who raised it ? . . . Not within the walls of Florence, but among the far-away fields of her lilies, was the child trained who was to raise that headstone of Beauty above her towers of watch and war. Remember all that he became ; count the sacred thoughts with which he filled the heart of Italy ; ask those who followed him what they learned at his feet ; and when you have numbered his labours, and received their testimony, if it seem to you that God had verily

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

poured out upon His servant no common nor restrained portion of His Spirit, and that he was indeed a king among the children of men, remember also that the legend upon the crown was that of David's—*I took thee from the sheepcote, and from following the sheep.*" It will be remembered that in his later studies of the building—in his *Mornings in Florence* and in a folio album of photographic reproductions—he called it "The Shepherd's Tower."

From Florence, Ruskin went in 1845 to Macugnaga, and thence, after other wanderings, to Venice. He was there again in 1846, and in 1849–50 and 1851–52, as already related. On the occasion of some, or all of these visits to Venice, he had spent many days at Padua. The Arena Chapel was his favourite haunt. His essay entitled *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, which accompanied the Arundel Society's woodcuts, did much to awaken in this country a due appreciation of the primitives, and has formed the staple of all later descriptions of Giotto's frescoes.

Ruskin's visits to Italy during later years were mainly governed by his desire to examine the work of particular painters. Thus, the long sojourn at Turin in 1858 had for its primary object the study of Paul Veronese. Ruskin's method of study, it may be remarked, was intensive, rather than extensive. "To have well studied one picture of Tintoret," he said, "one by Luini, one by Angelico, and a couple of Turner's drawings, will teach a man more than to have catalogued all the galleries of Europe; while to have drawn with attention a porch of Amiens, an arch at Verona, and a vault at Venice, will teach him more of architecture than to have made plans and sections of every big heap of brick or stone between St. Paul's and the Pyramids." He had never, I suppose, catalogued and noted every work by Veronese anywhere to be seen. He concentrated his study upon a few works—the great pictures in the Louvre, those in the Academy at Venice,



FLORENCE, FROM THE BADIA DI FIESOLE



## ITALY

and the "Queen of Sheba" at Turin. In 1858 he spent weeks of work on that one picture in the Turin Gallery.

Ruskin's Italian tour in 1862 was similarly devoted, in its primary purpose, to the study of Luini—mainly in S. Maurizio (or Monastero Maggiore) at Milan, though he visited Saronno also. The study of Luini's "St. Catherine" alone occupied him during several weeks. His water-colour copy of the figure, life-size, hangs in the Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford. In the autumn of 1869 he was elected to the Slade Professorship, and from time to time he went to Italy in pursuit of special studies for his Oxford classes, or of popular studies for a wider public. "It seems to me," he wrote, "that the real duty involved in my Oxford professorship cannot be completely done by giving lectures in Oxford only, but that I ought also to give what guidance I may to travellers in Italy." In 1870 he visited among other places Venice, Florence, Siena, Pisa, and Pistoja. The painters whom he specially studied in that year were Carpaccio, Tintoret, and Filippo Lippi. Of the study of Tintoret (and especially of the "Paradise" in the Ducal Palace), the lecture and pamphlet on *The Relation between Michael Angelo and Tintoret* were the result. In 1872 he visited (again among other places) Rome, Assisi, Pisa, Siena, Orvieto and Florence. His studies at Pisa (and some of the other places) resulted in the book *Val d'Arno*, already mentioned. The visit to Rome was noteworthy in his artistic life as marking the beginning of a close study and appreciation of Botticelli. He was again in Rome, and for a longer time, in 1874. He stayed at the Hôtel de Russie, and readers of *Fors Clavigera* will remember a pretty scene, enacted between him and a Capuchin friar in the courtyard of that mansion.<sup>1</sup> His first impressions of Rome (in 1840-41) are fully recorded in

<sup>1</sup> See Letter 56 (August 1875).

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

*Præterita*. He disliked St. Peter's, dismissed the Roman ruins as "rubbishy," and was in a perverse humour with the whole place. He never came to like St. Peter's, but in other respects the fascination of Rome gripped him in later years. Many of the open letters in *Fors Clavigera*, the letters to Miss Beever printed in *Hortus Inclusus*, letters to other correspondents now given in the Collected Works, and the Catalogue of his Drawings enable us to follow him through many Roman days to various favourite haunts. He relented even to the ruins and excavations, when his friend Mr. J. H. Parker took him to the Aventine. The Campagna had appealed to him even on his first visit, as a passage in *Modern Painters* may remind us :—"Perhaps there is no more impressive scene on earth than the solitary extent of the Campagna of Rome under evening light. Let the reader imagine himself for a moment withdrawn from the sounds and motion of the living world, and sent forth alone into this wild and wasted plain. The earth yields and crumbles beneath his foot, tread he never so lightly, for its substance is white, hollow, and carious, like the dusty wreck of the bones of men. The long knotted grass waves and tosses feebly in the evening wind, and the shadows of its motion shake feverishly along the banks of ruin that lift themselves to the sunlight. Hillocks of mouldering earth heave around him, as if the dead were struggling in their sleep ; scattered rocks of black stone, four-square, remnants of mighty edifices, not one left upon another, lie upon them to keep them down. A dull purple poisonous haze stretches level along the desert, veiling its spectral wrecks of massy ruins, on whose rents the red light rests, like a dying fire on defiled altars. The blue ridge of the Alban Mount lifts itself against a solemn space of green, clear, quiet sky. Watch-towers of dark clouds stand steadfastly along the promontories of the Apennines. From the plain to the mountains,

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the shattered aqueducts, pier beyond pier, melt into the darkness, like shadowy and countless troops of funeral mourners, passing from a nation's grave." The scene impressed him, but with something of the funereal and terrible. There is a softer note in the beautiful description of "A Lost Church in the Campagna" which he sent in 1874 to Miss Beever.<sup>1</sup> The churches of Rome interested Ruskin on this visit greatly. We may follow him, in his letters, to St. Cecilia—admiring the statue of the saint, of which there is a reproduction in the Brompton Oratory; to S. Gregorio, once the monastery of St. Andrew, recalling its legends and history; to St. John Lateran, drawing its exquisite cloisters; to S. Maria in Ara Coeli, reviving memories of his early visits to the musical services there and of his first sight of Miss Tollemache; or to S. Paolo fuori le Mura, thinking over the apostle's work in the world and conversing with a herdsman from a Campagna.<sup>2</sup> For rest, Ruskin was fond, like other visitors in Rome, of going to the Pincian or the Borghese Gardens.<sup>3</sup> The mountain outlines seen from Rome are, he says, of consummate beauty; references to Soracte and the Alban Mount are frequent in his books. But his principal haunt in 1874 was the Sistine Chapel, where he was engaged in studying and copying the frescoes by Perugino and Botticelli—with results embodied in *Ariadne Florentina*.

In the same year Ruskin spent some weeks at Assisi. They were weeks of much significance, as I have explained elsewhere,<sup>4</sup> in his artistic and spiritual development. He then discovered on closer examination of Giotto's work, he says, a fallacy which had underlain all his art-teaching since 1858—the fallacy, namely,

<sup>1</sup> See *Hortus Inclusus*; or Library Edition, vol. xxxvii. p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> See *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 43 (July 1874).

<sup>3</sup> For the Pincian, see *Præterita*, vol. ii. § 46, and Library Edition, vol. xxiii. p. xxxvii.; for the Borghese Gardens, Library Edition, vol. xxiii. p. xxxvi.

<sup>4</sup> *Life of Ruskin*, vol. ii. chap. xiv.

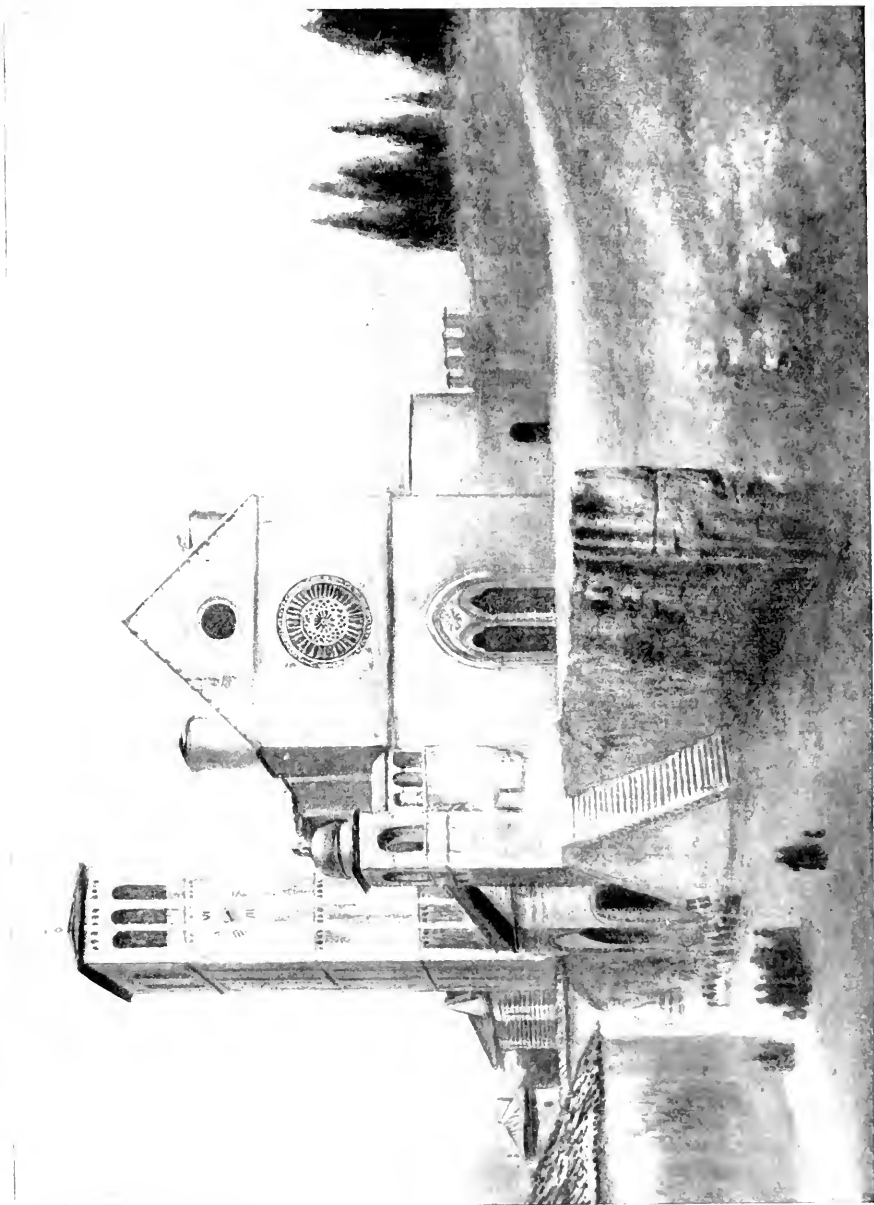
## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

that religious artists were weaker than irreligious. His sojourn in the city of St. Francis, too, and study of the life and works of the saint influenced his religious outlook and encouraged a vein of mysticism. The result of Ruskin's artistic studies at Assisi is scattered—in various Letters of *Fors Clavigera*, and in letters and lectures first printed in the Library Edition. He lodged, as already mentioned, in the "Leone"; but he found a workroom in the cell of one of the monks, with whom he made friends. *Fors Clavigera* for 1874-5-6-7 contains many allusions to this "Sacristan's Cell," and in the Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford a sketch of it may be seen. At Assisi, as in so many other of his haunts, Ruskin left a fragrant memory behind him. "I learnt," says Sir William Richmond, in describing a visit to Assisi, "that Mr. Ruskin had been there for some months, and I gathered that he had taken hold of the very soul of the folk of Assisi, and engaged the adoration, respect, and friendship of Fra Giovanni, who could talk of nothing else but Mr. Ruskin. Dilating upon his industry, he explained the motives of the frescoes by Giotto, in Italian but after the true Ruskinian manner. Wrapped up in a pocket-handkerchief, after the fashion of the Italians, he kept letters from Ruskin, and treasured them like the relics of a saint. The master annually forwarded a subscription towards the expenses of keeping the church clean, and also towards such repairs of the fabric as might be necessary."<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin spent some weeks in 1874 at Florence also, writing there much of his *Mornings in Florence*. The thin parts, bound in red leatherette, in which this book first appeared, have been almost as familiar in Florence as "Baedeker" itself, and M. de la Sizeranne opens his principal essay on Ruskin with a pretty reference to the part dealing with the Spanish chapel at S. Maria

<sup>1</sup> "Ruskin as I knew him," in *St. George*, vol. v. p. 297.





ASSISI: THE CHURCH OF S. FRANCESCO



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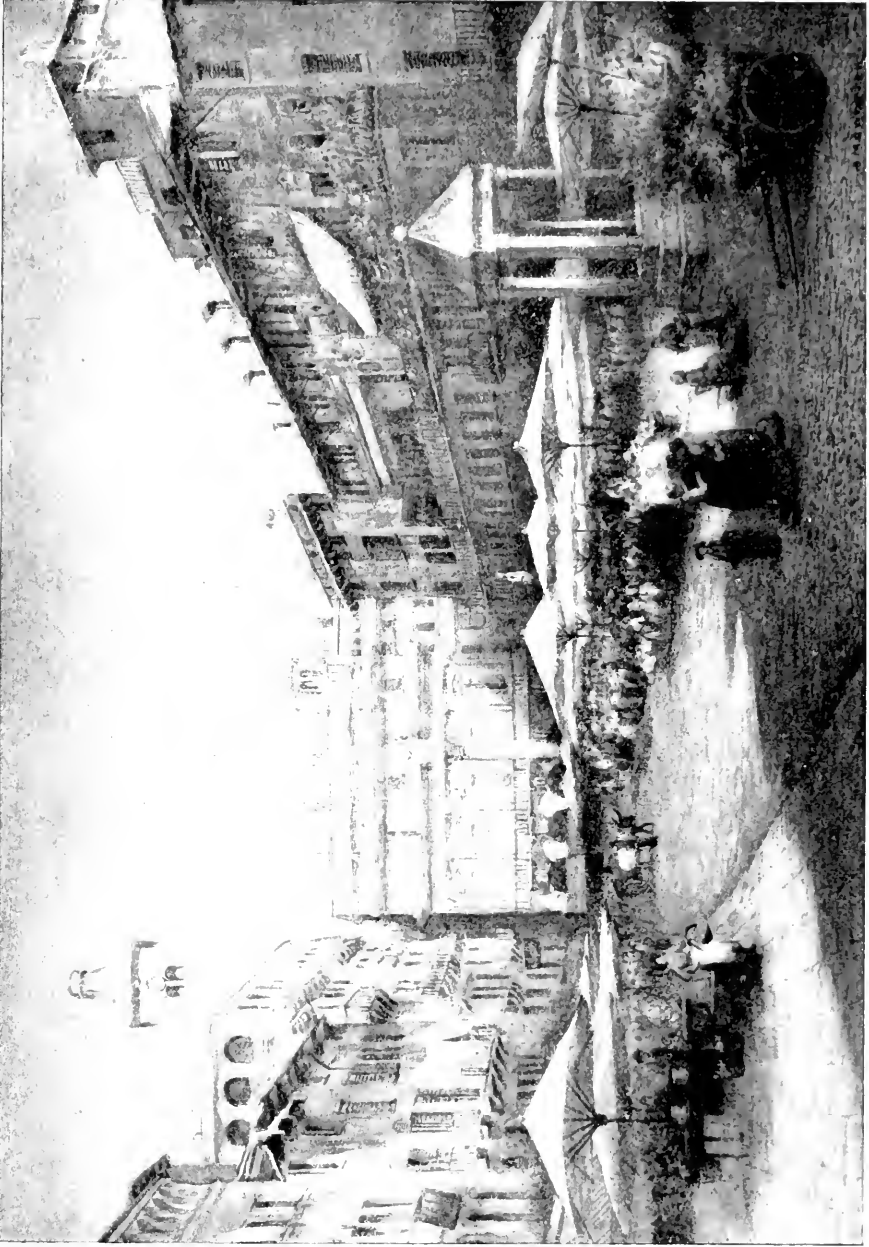
Novella. "Wishing to be alone," he says, "I went as early as nine o'clock, and found the cloister deserted. The freshness of the morning and the monastic calm of the place made it a delicious resort. For some little time I had been sauntering along the pavement of tombstones which fringes the Green Cloister, and I was approaching the Spanish Chapel, when a soft sound, rising and flowing, fell upon my ear, a murmur of words, speaking, reading, as in prayer. Suddenly in the luminous shadow I perceived girlish forms . . . and one of them was reading. . . . She read on for some time, passing from eloquent generalisations on the necessity of discipline in human thought to minutest observations on the fingers or the hair of this or that personage in the fresco, noting where they were retouched, studying the attitudes and the draperies. The audience listened intently, forming face with the precision of a Prussian platoon towards this figure or that, as the small red and gold book directed them. I observed that the pilgrims had stationed themselves on the very sepulchral slab of those Spanish Ambassadors who gave the chapel its name ; and the words they were reading seemed like a tuft of flowers springing from the dust of the past. What then was this book ? What this unknown liturgy ? Who the priest of this Religion of Beauty ? The sacristan, returning for a moment, muttered a name—*Ruskin*." <sup>1</sup> His haunts at this time, 1874, may be gathered from the other chapters of the book. But, indeed, at Florence, as at Venice, one may find him everywhere—by Giotto's Tower, as already said ; sketching the Baptistry, "the centre of the arts of the world," as he somewhere calls it ; drawing the rose-terraces at S. Miniato ; examining everywhere the palaces and pictures ; making hay, as he tells us, in summer with the Franciscans at Fiesole ; sitting silent with Carthusians in their

<sup>1</sup> *Ruskin and the Religion of Beauty*, p. x.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

little garden in the Val d'Ema. But it were superfluous to continue. There is hardly a spot in Florence which one may not regard as haunted by his gracious spirit.

There was, however, a city in Italy which Ruskin loved perhaps more than Florence; and more too than Venice. A forgotten annual of the last century—the *Forget-me-not* of 1827—contained beautiful engravings of two drawings by Samuel Prout. One was of the “Sepulchral Monument of Verona;” the other of St. Mark’s at Venice. A copy of the annual, given to Ruskin by one of his aunts, was, he says, the really most precious and continuous in deep effect upon him of all gifts to his childhood. With the stones of Venice he was destined to connect his name imperishably; but he loved the stones of Verona no less, and devoted to their study hardly less of long and affectionate labour. “Verona,” he said in *Præterita*, “has given the colouring to all that Rouen, Geneva, and Pisa taught. She has virtually represented the fate and the beauty of Italy to me; and whatever concerning Italy I have felt, or been able with any charm or force to say, has been dealt with more deeply, and said more earnestly, for her sake.” His work on Venice is, however, concentrated in a particular book. He had intended to write a book on Verona also, as a companion volume to *The Bible of Amiens*; but strength failed him, and his studies of Verona remain scattered in a dozen volumes and in a hundred drawings. He had for special reasons taken Venetian architecture as a theme, but “the Gothic of Verona,” he said at the time, “is far nobler than the Gothic of Venice.” “If I were asked,” he wrote, “to lay my finger in a map of the world, on the spot of the world’s surface which contained at this moment [1857] the most singular concentration of art-teaching and art-treasure, I should lay it on the name of the town of Verona. Other cities, indeed, contain more works of



VERONA: THE MARKET PLACE



## ITALY

carriageable art, but none contain so much of the glorious local art, and of the springs and sources of art, which can by no means be made subjects of package or portorage, nor, I grieve to say, of salvage. Verona possesses, in the first place, not the largest, but the most perfect and intelligible Roman amphitheatre that exists, still unbroken in circle of step, and strong in succession of vault and arch: it contains minor Roman monuments, gateways, theatres, baths, wrecks of temples, which give the streets of its suburbs a character of antiquity unexampled elsewhere, except in Rome itself. But it contains, in the next place, what Rome does not contain—perfect examples of the great twelfth-century Lombardic architecture, which was the root of all the mediæval art of Italy, without which no Giotto, no Angelico, no Raphael would have been possible: it contains that architecture, not in rude forms, but in the most perfect and loveliest types it ever attained—contains those, not in ruins, nor in altered and hardly decipherable fragments, but in churches perfect from porch to apse, with all their carving fresh, their pillars firm, their joints unloosened. Besides these, it includes examples of the great thirteenth and fourteenth-century Gothic of Italy, not merely perfect, but elsewhere unrivalled. At Rome, the Roman—at Pisa, the Lombard—architecture may be seen in greater or in equal nobleness; but not at Rome, nor Pisa, nor Florence, nor in any city of the world, is there a great mediæval Gothic like the Gothic of Verona. Elsewhere, it is either less pure in type or less lovely in completion: only at Verona may you see it in the simplicity of its youthful power, and the tenderness of its accomplished beauty. And Verona possesses, in the last place, the loveliest Renaissance architecture of Italy, not disturbed by pride, nor defiled by luxury, but rising in fair fulfilment of domestic service, serenity of effortless grace, and modesty of home seclusion;

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

its richest work given to the windows that open on the narrowest streets and most silent gardens. All this she possesses, in the midst of natural scenery such as assuredly exists nowhere else in the habitable globe—a wild Alpine river foaming at her feet, from whose shore the rocks rise in a great crescent, dark with cypress, and misty with olive : illimitably, from before her southern gates, the tufted plains of Italy sweep and fade in golden light ; around her, north and west, the Alps crowd in crested troops, and the winds of Benacus bear to her the coolness of their snows.”

All the points mentioned in this claim for the pre-eminence of Verona might be illustrated by more detailed references in other passages of Ruskin's books—in *The Seven Lamps*, *The Stones of Venice*, *Aratra Pentelici*, *Fors Clavigera* ; in his monograph for the Arundel Society on the Cavalli Monuments ; and in many incidental notes elsewhere. Of the early churches, Ruskin admired especially San Zeno. “ My first impression on coming to Verona,” he wrote, “ after four long months in Venice, is of the exquisitely neat masonry and perfect *feeling* here ; a style of Gothic formed by a combination of Lombard surface ornament with Pisan Gothic, than which nothing can possibly be more chaste, pure or solemn.”<sup>1</sup> Of the later Gothic, he wrote in the first volume of *The Stones of Venice* : “ While I have studied long at Abbeville, without in the least finding that it made me care less for Verona, I never remained long in Verona without feeling some doubt of the nobility of Abbeville.” And in the succeeding volume, in the famous chapter on “ The Nature of Gothic,” he illustrated the comparison in detail by drawings of canopies from the porch of Abbeville and from one of the Scaliger tombs respectively : “ The Veronese Gothic is strong in its masonry,

<sup>1</sup> A passage from his diary (1849-50), printed by him in an appendix to *The Stones of Venice*, vol. i.



## ITALY

simple in its masses, but perpetual in its variety. The late French Gothic is weak in masonry, broken in mass, and repeats the same idea continually. It is very beautiful, but the Italian Gothic is the nobler style." There are two sepulchral monuments in Verona which Ruskin most admired, and he sketched them over and over again. One is the tomb of Count Guglielmo da Castelbarco, standing over the small cemetery gate of St. Anastasia—"this pure and lovely monument," he calls it, "my most beloved throughout all the length and breadth of Italy;—chief, as I think, among all the sepulchral monuments of a land of mourning."<sup>1</sup> The other is the Tomb of Can Grande:—fully described in the second volume of *The Stones of Venice*. I quote the final passage only:—"Though beautiful, the tomb is so little conspicuous or intrusive, that it serves only to decorate the portal of the little chapel, and is hardly regarded by the traveller as he enters. When it is examined, the history of the acts of the dead is found subdued into dim and minute ornament upon his coffin; and the principal aim of the monument is to direct the thoughts to his image as he lies in death, and to the expression of his hope of resurrection; while, seen as by the memory, far away, diminished in the brightness of the sky, there is set the likeness of his armed youth, stately, as it stood of old in the front of battle, and meet to be thus recorded for us, that we may now be able to remember the dignity of the frame, of which those who once looked upon it hardly remembered that it was dust." The little square with the Scaliger tombs was Ruskin's favourite haunt at Verona. He was never tired of drawing details from one or other of the tombs. He at least was susceptible to the fascination of city architecture: "like him who sat so often where the sun struck from the west, to watch the lines of the dome of Florence drawn on the deep

<sup>1</sup> He seems for a moment to have forgotten the monument to Ilaria (see above, p. 187).

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

sky, or like those, his Hosts, who could bear daily to behold, from their palace chambers, the places where their fathers lay at rest, at the meeting of the dark streets of Verona." Of the "lovely Renaissance architecture" in Verona, Ruskin specially admired the Loggia of Fra Giocondo in the Palazzo del Consiglio—"my favourite palace in Verona," he wrote on the back of Mr. Bunney's drawing of it (now in the Ruskin Museum at Sheffield). He counted himself fortunate in having set the artist to work just in time to take record of the building before "restoration."

Ruskin's visits to Verona were many, but need not here be detailed. It may be taken that whenever he went to Venice, he went to Verona also; when there, he stayed at the "Due Torri"—"a remarkably good and comfortable inn," says an old edition of Murray's Handbook, "with a table d'hôte at one o'clock, which, after all, is the most convenient hour. The master of the hotel presides at the table; a good old-fashioned custom, now going fast out of use." Ruskin's longest continuous sojourn at Verona was in 1869, when he spent nearly four months there, making numerous drawings and preparing a lecture on the city which he gave at the Royal Institution in the following year. The lecture opens with a description of a walk, or drive, up the hill on which the eastern walls of Verona are built, until "you may see entire Verona, and all the plain between Alps and Apennine." Travellers who take this walk, with Ruskin's lecture in their pocket, will, I am confident, not regret the expedition. "Give yourself time for Verona," he once wrote to a friend about to visit Italy; "it is very lovely." It is also, as I have now summarily indicated, very closely associated with Ruskin's work and interests. I do not know if any old inhabitant still survives who remembers Ruskin. But in 1864 Mr. William Rossetti, in noting a visit to San Zeno in his diary, wrote: "The custode, a most intelligent young man,

## ITALY

who takes the most genuine interest in his church, remembers Ruskin well, and seems to have been imbued with some of his love of old work and hatred of restorations," and "the same custode," he tells us, "was still there in 1899."<sup>1</sup>

Ruskin loved alike the buildings of Verona and the landscape around it, but the beauty of the art, perhaps, even more than the beauty of nature. This was typical of his impressions of Italy generally, and I may illustrate the point by quoting two passages from his books, referring to Verona and to Venice respectively :—

"I remember a city, more nobly placed even than your Edinburgh, which, instead of the valley that you have now filled by lines of railroad, has a broad and rushing river of blue water sweeping through the heart of it ; which, for the dark and solitary rock that bears your castle, has an amphitheatre of cliffs crested with cypresses and olive ; which, for the two masses of Arthur's Seat and the ranges of the Pentlands, has a chain of blue mountains higher than the haughtiest peaks of your Highlands ; and which, for your far-away Ben Ledi and Ben More, has the great central chain of the St. Gothard Alps : and yet, as you go out of the gates, and walk in the suburban streets of that city, the eye never seeks to rest on that external scenery, however gorgeous ; it does not look for the gaps between the houses, as you do here ; it may for a few moments follow the broken line of the great Alpine battlements ; but it is only where they form a background for other battlements, built by the hand of man. There is no necessity felt to dwell on the blue river or the burning hills. The heart and eye have enough to do in the streets of the city itself ; they are contented there ; nay, they sometimes turn from the natural scenery, as if too savage and solitary, to dwell with a

<sup>1</sup> *Rossetti Papers*, p. 58.

## HOMES AND HAUNTS OF RUSKIN

deeper interest on the palace walls that cast their shade upon the streets, and the crowd of towers that rise out of that shadow into the depth of the sky " (Edinburgh lectures on *Architecture and Painting*).

" Sometimes when walking at evening on the Lido, whence the great chain of the Alps, crested with silver clouds, might be seen rising above the front of the Ducal Palace, I used to feel as much awe in gazing on the building as on the hills, and could believe that God had done a greater work in breathing into the narrowness of dust the mighty spirits by whom its haughty walls had been raised, and its burning legends written, than in lifting the rocks of granite higher than the clouds of heaven, and veiling them with their various mantle of purple flower and shadowy pine " (*The Stones of Venice*, vol. ii.).

The rough sketch of Ruskin's Italian travels, given in the preceding pages, will have served, I hope, to illustrate the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter. His " learning and eloquence have done much to adorn the arts and public buildings " of Italy. He has written many haunting pieces also upon the natural beauties of the country. But in his feeling for Italy, as for Switzerland, Ruskin was no mere *dilettante*. Italians are grateful to foreigners who appreciate the beauty of their land and its works of art, but they feel some natural irritation at those who regard her as a mere museum. Byron's famous apostrophe to " fair Italy " looks only to the past :

" Thou art the garden of the world, the home  
Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree ;  
Even in thy desert, what is like to thee ?  
Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste  
More rich than other climes' fertility."

## ITALY

Italy, a nation, has a present and a future. Ruskin, it may therefore be well to add, had been in sympathy with his friend Mrs. Browning in her attitude towards the liberation of Italy; and though he afterwards said much that was severe about Italian *progresso*, he never lost sympathy with the Italian peasantry. This is a side of his Italian interests which found literary expression after his last visit to Florence in 1882. He there made the acquaintance of Miss Francesca Alexander, who became one of the dearest friends of his later years. There are no more charming records of the Italian peasant-folk than those contained in the three books which Ruskin edited for Miss Alexander—*The Story of Ida*, the *Roadside Songs of Tuscany*, and *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*. In the "voiceless religion and uncomplaining duty" of the common people is to be found, he said, "that Church on earth against which the gates of hell shall not prevail." In the heroism of the peasant races lies, he held, the best strength of nations.

## CHAPTER XIII

### BRANTWOOD

" I weary for the torrent leaping  
From off the scar's rough crest ;  
My muse is on the mountain sleeping,  
My harp is sunk to rest.

I weary for the fountain foaming,  
For shady holm and hill ;  
My mind is on the mountain roaming,  
My spirit's voice is still.

The crags are lone on Coniston  
And Loweswater's dell ;  
And dreary on the mighty one,  
The cloud-enwreathed Scawfell.

Oh ! what although the crags be stern  
Their mighty peaks that sever,  
Fresh flies the breeze on mountain fern,  
And free on mountain heather."

So had Ruskin written in 1832, a year in which he had not been among the mountains. The child was father to the man ; and forty years later the desire expressed in these childish verses was fulfilled. Many homes of a sort and many haunts he had found in previous years. He had played at various times with the thought of finding a house in Venice, at Chamonix, on the Brezon or some other mountain top. But at the last it was the first love that conquered. He heard and obeyed the call of his own Lake Country, and it was on Coniston Water that he made his final home.

In the summer of 1871 Ruskin had a serious illness at Matlock,

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and as he lay on his sick-bed he was heard to say: "If only I could lie down beneath the crags of Coniston." A few weeks later, he heard that a house likely to suit him, known as Brantwood, was for sale on the shores of that lake, a mile or two from the village. He bought without seeing it. The price paid was £1500. The purchase was pleasantly arranged, says the previous owner, then in America, in a couple of letters. The house thus acquired was Ruskin's home for nearly thirty years, and for the last eleven years of his life he never passed a night away from it.

The previous owner was W. J. Linton, the poet, wood-engraver and political agitator. In 1852, "I found a home," he says in his volume of "Memories," "at Brantwood on the eastern side of Coniston Water, some nine or ten miles from Ambleside, a house under Furness Fells, in Monk Coniston (so called because the land had been part of the domain of the Cistercian monks of Furness Abbey). The manorial right had fallen to the Buccleughs at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries; and to the Duke of Buccleugh, my portion of the land being copyhold, I paid a yearly fine of one shilling and three halfpence, to have my title recorded in the manorial books, when after a year's tenancy I was enabled by the help of mortgage-money to buy the estate,—a fairly large house and ten acres of copse-wood steeply rising up the fell. . . . I rented a garden between the house and the Lake, and another small garden patch with bees, reached by steps to above the height of the house. From this patch was a view across the Lake to the Old Man and Coniston Crags under Wetherlam; and from the lower garden we looked up the lake to Helvellyn. I had some twenty sheep, feeding on the fell which rose some three or four hundred feet steeply, directly behind the house, the side of the fell covered with copse wood, young oak and hazel. On one part, not so brant (*i.e.* steep), I felled the larger oak, barked it (much

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with my own hands), and sold the bark ; then, perhaps for the first time ever done, had an acre or more ploughed, and corn and garden stuff raised upon it. My sheep-feeding on the fell above entitled me, when the common land between Coniston Water and Esthwaite Water was enclosed, to an apportionment of six acres, mostly covered with heather and juniper, so that I had sixteen acres instead of ten to sell to Ruskin." In an out-house Linton set up a printing-press at which to produce his monthly journal entitled *The English Republic*. The periodical did not pay its expenses, and for the rest Linton was occupied at Brantwood with his work as an engraver. In some respects the new owner maintained the Linton tradition. Ruskin carried on wood-cutting and agricultural experiments ; as may be read in *Fors Clavigera* and the papers of the " St. George's Guild." He too extended his borders. Within the house much artistic work went on ; and, if Ruskin did not carry on any Republican propaganda, yet he issued many fiery pamphlets from Brantwood " with a great hope of disturbing the public peace in various directions," and in the papers of the Guild, also issued thence, he too did not rest from strife and sought to " build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land."

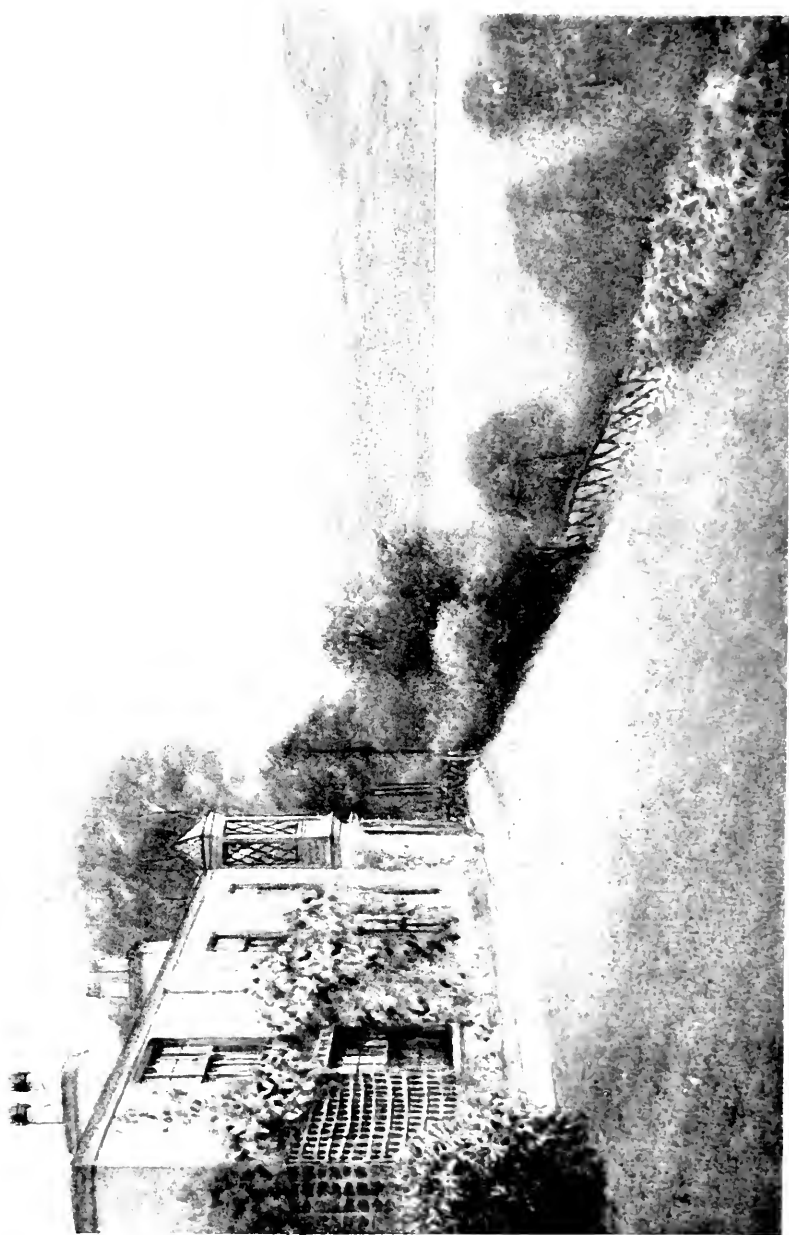
The house when Ruskin bought it was little more than a fair-sized cottage. He thought it " dilapidated and dismal " when he first saw it. Mrs. Lynn Linton used to speak of it as " a dungeon " and " stifled with shade." There was a small dining-room at the back ; and in front, a drawing-room and a study. " Little alteration was made," writes Mr. Wedderburn,<sup>1</sup> " during the first years of Ruskin's ownership. Content to render it warm and weather-tight, and to adorn its walls with his pictures, his library of books and missals, and his cabinets of minerals and

<sup>1</sup> In the *National Review*, August 1910.





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coins, he left it, so to speak, to grow with the growing demands for increased space. Almost his only addition, on first taking possession, was to put to a corner of his own bedroom a windowed turret whence he could see, as at that time he never failed to do, the dawn on the hills and lake from almost every side. After a few years a new dining-room was added facing the lake, and with a south window designed by Ruskin himself. Till then, to lose no moment of a bright day, it had been his habit to have the breakfast-table set in the drawing-room, and often in summer to leave the dinner-table to watch the splendour of the sunset. In a few more years a small studio and some additional rooms were built, and finally, in his life-time (for there have been additions since his death), some of the rock was cut away, and a new studio literally built on to it, almost completing the irregular pile of buildings now so familiar to the tourist on Coniston Water."

The beauty of Brantwood is not in the house or even in its grounds, but in its situation and the views. It stands on the terrace of the hills that flank the east side of the lake—a terrace of green land between the water and the heather. Tent Lodge, a little nearer to Coniston village, enjoys much the same situation. It was lent to Tennyson for his honeymoon, who wrote thus on his arrival: "Mr. Marshall's park looked lovely as the Garden of Eden, as we descended the hill to this place. We have a very beautiful view from our drawing-room windows,—crag, mountain, woods and lake, which look especially fine as the sun is dropping behind the hills." The poet was fond too, it seems, of after-sunset walks; for, according to Mr. Linton, "Tennyson had a cross chalked on the gate that he might not miss it at night under the dark tree-shadows." "A mere nook of turf above a nest of garden, but commanding such a piece of lake and hill as can only be seen in England." Such was the description which Ruskin

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gave of his terrace in inviting Lord Avebury to Brantwood. And even in the Lake District of England there is perhaps no lovelier view than is commanded by the terrace or front rooms of Brantwood. Its attraction to Ruskin was increased, I imagine, by the seclusion and quiet. The grounds rise so steeply from the road and shore, that while they command a wide prospect, they are not themselves commanded. You might pass along the road and not know that the house was there at all. In his early essay on *The Poetry of Architecture* Ruskin thus describes the ideal position for a country home:—"The breakfast-room must have a prospect, and an extensive one. But he must be an awkward architect who cannot afford an opening to one window without throwing the whole mass of the building open to public view; particularly as, in the second place, the essence of a good window view is the breaking out of the distant features in little well-composed *morceaux*, not the general glare of a mass of one tone. Have we a line of lake? the silver water must glance out here and there among the trunks of near trees, just enough to show where it flows; then break into an open swell of water, just where it is widest, or where the shore is prettiest. Have we mountains? their peaks must appear over foliage, or through it, the highest and boldest catching the eye conspicuously." It is just so that the Old Man of Coniston is seen from Brantwood. Indeed Ruskin in this passage might seem to be describing his future home.

A visit to Brantwood gives new point and interest to many a passage in his books, and many a piece from his brush. In his Drawing School at Oxford there is an exquisite drawing of a wild strawberry plant, inscribed "Brantwood, June '73." You may see at Brantwood, in a little garden specially his own, the plants growing among rocks. Sitting one morning, before breakfast, on the tiny lawn in front of the house, I watched the movements

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of a squirrel. Ruskin might have seen them from his study window, when he penned his famous description of "the little dark-eyed miracle of the forest glancing from branch to branch more like a sunbeam than a living creature." Few passages by Ruskin have been so often quoted, I suppose, as that with which he ended his "Turner Notes" in 1878, a day or two before he was stricken down by brain-fever: "Morning breaks as I write, along those Coniston Fells, and the level mists, motionless, and grey beneath the rose of the moorlands, veil the lower woods, and the sleeping village, and the long lawns by the lake-shore. Oh, that someone had but told me, in my youth, when all my heart seemed to be set on those colours and clouds, that appear for a little while and then vanish away, how little my love of them would serve me, when the silence of lawn and wood in the dews of the morning should be completed; and all my thoughts should be of those whom, by neither, I was to meet more!" The cunning collocation of the words has been discussed by critics of style, and the wiser of them have added that the art would have missed its mark except that it was the expression of an exquisitely sensitive soul. The famous passage will be read with some added poignancy by one who has witnessed from Ruskin's home the scene which he describes.

The visitor who would seek out Ruskin's haunts will enjoy many a pleasant walk and view. Close to Brantwood itself, on a little eminence beside the lake, a little farther along the road, is a spot commanding a fine view over the waters, where towards the end of his life Ruskin used at one time to be wheeled in a bath-chair. A little further on is a favourite scene which he described in one of the last pages which came from his pen: "The shore of my own lake, at the little promontory of shingle thrown out into it by the only mountain brook on this eastern side (Beck Leven)

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which commands the windings of its wooded shore under Furness Fells, and the calm of its fairest expanse of mirror wave,—a scene which is in general almost melancholy in its perfect solitude ; but, when the woods are in their gladness and their green, how much purer, how much softer than ever emerald !—of their unsullied spring, and the light of dawning summer, possessing alike the clouds and mountains of the west,—it is, literally, one of the most beautiful and strange remnants of all that was once most sacred in this British land.” The little pier or breakwater for the Brantwood boats recalls days of his more active life ; as also do the paths and streams up the hill behind the house, where he amused himself with many tiny experiments in irrigation and reclamation, as related in the Master’s Reports to the Guild of St. George. He was fond of boating on the lake, and would often row himself across to the Thwaite, the house of his dear friend, Miss Beever, the mistress of the “ Hortus Inclusus.” There is a pleasant description of her actual garden in Mr. Tuckwell’s *Tongues in Trees* : “ the tendrils of clinging thought and mossy cups for dew in the Garden of Herbs where Love is ” must be sought in Ruskin’s letters. A tour of the lake in the steam “ gondola ” is one of the expeditions ordained for visitors to Coniston. The directors of the Furness Railway have named their pier “ Ruskin Pier.” The steamer touches at the end of the lake at the Lake Bank Hotel. The view thence, looking up the Lake, is justly celebrated. When I was last in the district I bought a photograph described as “ Professor Ruskin’s favourite view.” It is of the scene from Lake Bank. But tourists in the Lake Country must expect to hear of a good many of “ Ruskin’s favourite views,” seats and walks.

A favourite walk was to Monk Coniston Tarn, “ a pretty bit of water on the hills, with a fine panorama of mountains all



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round." A charming and characteristic anecdote of an expedition to this spot may be read in Mr. Collingwood's *Ruskin Relics*, whose little *Book of Coniston* should also be in the hands of all Ruskinian pilgrims to the district. Ruskin himself refers to the spot in *Love's Meinie*, where, in inviting his friends to send him a couple of rare birds, he promises, on behalf of his Squire and Squire's lady (Mr. and Mrs. Victor Marshall, of Monk Coniston), that the pair shall get some peace, if they choose to take it, "and as many water-lily leaves as they can trip upon, on the tarns of Monk Coniston."

In Coniston itself the village school has many associations with Ruskin, as all readers of *Fors Clavigera* will remember. A window in the Roman Catholic Chapel was his gift, and this piece of kindly neighbourliness was perhaps the origin of rumours circulated at one time that he had joined, or was about to join, the Roman communion. To the Coniston Institute he gave various objects, and after his death a "Ruskin Museum" was established there as a local memorial to him. It contains a large number of his drawings, books and autographs, as well as many personal relics.

For further rambles, a visitor desirous of following in Ruskin's footsteps will, for one expedition, ascend the Coniston Old Man. Even in old age, and immediately after a serious illness, Ruskin was able to report that he had been "half way up the Old Man, without more fatigue than deepened the night's rest, and greatly pleased that, the day being exceptionally clear, he saw Ingleborough without any feeling of diminished faculty of sight."<sup>1</sup> If the visitor is interested in geology, he should extend his walk to Goat's Water—the dark and melancholy tarn which lies in a deep hollow between the Dows Craggs and the Old Man. "The most wonderful piece of weathering in all my own district," says Ruskin,

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Professor Norton, Sept. 13, 1886 (Library Edition, vol. xxxvii. p. 570).

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“is on a projecting mass of intensely hard rock on the eastern side of Goat’s Water.” Mr. Malleson, in his *Holiday Studies*, has described the summer day’s excursion on which he took Ruskin to see this rock. There are many geological rambles which a pedestrian may enjoy in the district with Ruskin’s lecture on *Yewdale and its Streamlets* for his guide : it was one of his very best lectures, he used to say.

And now our travels in Ruskin’s footsteps must end. At the foot of his grave in the churchyard of Coniston (Plate XLIV) we say farewell. He had travelled much, as we have heard ; placing “ a posy before every shrine of Beauty, Gentleness, and Love.” After his wanderings and his labours he rests, as he desired, “ beneath the crags of Coniston.”



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